

Stapeley & District Parish Council

Annual Report 2012-2013



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www.stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is my second annual report to the parish and I start off by thanking my fellow parish councillors for having re-elected me as Chairman in May 2012, and for their support during the year.

The main item of interest to everyone will be the **community hall**. A committee has been set up comprising five parish councillors and up to ten volunteers. We only have six volunteers at present; so, if you are interested in becoming involved in the running of the hall, please let us know.

The hall has been open since November 2012 when we signed the lease with Cheshire East Council. We had our first booking on 5 January 2013 and since then it has been put to good use with regular user activities such as Beavers/Scouts, nursery, Zumba and other fitness groups; Women's Institute meetings, and many others. Although this is a community asset and we had only planned to be self-financing, we are confident that there will be a profit at the end of the lease in November 2013. We are hoping that Cheshire East Council will demonstrate its faith in the Parish Council and allow the hall to continue to operate as a community asset, probably as a charitable trust.

We are due to start discussions with our Legal Adviser about the next steps in the process.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the volunteers on the Community Hall Management Committee. They are a small, but very enthusiastic, hard-working and efficient group of people who are determined to make the hall successful.

There have been a number of vandalism incidents, but for the most part, the constant use of the hall is seeing a reduction in these. We are expecting to be able to install outside lighting in the very near future and hope that this will assist in reducing anti-social behaviour.

Planning has featured heavily on Parish Council agendas this year and we were delighted that so many residents have been able to attend some of the special meetings when planning was considered. We had a Public Debate back in September 2012 when Borough Councillor Michael Jones (the Leader of Cheshire East Council) addressed the meeting which focused almost entirely on planning matters.

David Wilson Homes has now started to build on part of the former Stapeley Water Gardens site.

Muller Group Homes put in two applications relating to development on land in Stapeley and as many of you will be aware, one of the applications was refused on 3 April 2013 by the Cheshire East Council Strategic Planning Board. The second application, also on the agenda, was recommended for refusal because of the existence of a number of Category 'A' Oak trees and no alternative provision had been identified by the applicant. At the meeting itself, Members of the Strategic Planning Board and local residents were astonished to learn that the trees had been felled only two days before the Board meeting by an unknown person or company and for this reason, the decision was deferred. We await with interest the next steps, but the Leader of Cheshire East Council has promised action. At the time of writing, indications are that the application is to be heard on 22 May 2013.

Our partnership with **Cheshire East Council** continues and the two Borough Councillors, Peter Groves (who is also a parish councillor) and Andrew Martin, attend all our meetings and report on matters of interest relating to Borough Council business and those which will have a significant effect on the parish.

Community Carols: We held our second Community Carols event on 18 December 2012 on the Cronkinson Farm pub site and are planning a similar event this year. Mike Docker, one of our parish councillors, took the lead in organising the event. Nantwich and District Band accompanied the Carol-singing and Mike Docker acted as Master of Ceremonies. This year's event is likely to be on Thursday, 19 December, but check the website and notice-board for details. We have not yet decided if this will be held inside the community hall, or outside, again at the pub.

With the help of Cheshire East Council, we were prepared for the winter weather. We were provided with a total of five winter-weather kits each comprising a 25kg bag of grit, snow shovel, yard brush, work gloves and goggles. Residents can borrow this equipment which is now in five separate locations: Cronkinson Pub, Parklands Day Nursery (First Dig Lane), the Co-Op Store, the Community Hall, and the home of one of the Community Hall volunteers. Contact the Clerk for details.

Sandy Givvin - Freeman

COMMUNICATION

This report is but one means of communicating with residents. We publish a quarterly newsletter, but the programme for that has slipped a little this year owing to the additional work we have been involved in since the community hall became operational.

We aim to hold another Public Debate during the Summer. This will be held either at Pear Tree School or in the community hall, and we will advertise the date in the next edition of the newsletter which is planned for distribution in July.

We do feel that we are communicating better with our residents and hope that the feeling is mutual. Don't forget! We live in your parish too and what affects you also affects us. We want to retain Stapeley and the surrounding area as a pleasant place to live and if change has to occur, then we will do all we can to mitigate any adverse impact.

Website

The Parish Council launched a new-design website and thanks go to Jo Hillman, parish councillor, who was key to the re-design. We hope that residents will find it more pleasing on the eye, easier to navigate and contain more information. The contract for website hosting is coming to an end in June and we are currently inviting companies to quote for the new contract.

COMMUNITY HALL

The Management Committee for the Community Hall is exploring the possibility of having an official opening in December. Ideas are not yet firmed up, but will be considered in more detail during the Summer.

Details are on the website and include the fees and charges. If you wish to make a booking, you can send an e-mail or telephone 07795 632 541. There is a rota of volunteers who are staffing the system. And.....hot off the press! you can now check on-line for available slots and pay on-line.

E-mail for bookings is:
hallbookings@stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk.

FINANCE

In January 2013, the Parish Council agreed its budget for the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. We set a budget of just under £55,000 and in view of an under-spend during the financial year 2012-2013 the Parish Council requested a precept of

£25,800. This represents an additional £18.98 Council Tax for each Band D property. The key areas of spend in 2013-2014 are:

	£
Administration	8,500
Parish Councillors expenses	950
Insurance, audit and subscriptions	1,700
Room hire	820
Grants	2,200
Street lighting repairs and electricity	1,000
Community Hall funding	15,000
Community Hall projects	7,300
Community Hall – legal advice for setting up a trust	1,000
Speed Watch	6,600
Technical support – planning	5,000
Community Carols	500
Maintenance of land at Talbot Way	3,000
Website	1,300
TOTAL	<u>54,870</u>

Please see pages 7-8 for the detailed position for the financial year ended 31 March 2013.

What is a precept? A local council receives the majority of its funding from an annual charge, called the **precept**, and this is requested from the Borough Council and then re-charged to local electors through their Council Tax bill.

Precepts requested in the last five years:

2008-2009	£12,500
2009-2010	£10,000
2010-2011	£37,500
2011-2012	£40,000
2012-2013	£ 7,000

GRANTS

In 2012-2013, the Parish Council made two grants to the Parish Plan Implementation Group (Stapeley Parish Action Group, or "SPAG" as it is commonly known). One grant was third-party funding to assist in developing the playground on the corner of Peter

de Stapleigh Way, and the second was to fund the cost of publishing the refreshed Parish Plan which was issued to each household.

In the next financial year, additional funding has been included towards the cost of a Trim Trail and some traffic/highway initiatives which are yet to be formulated; both schemes are being initiated by SPAG.

The Parish Council has also contributed to specific projects at the local primary schools in the last two years. Each school has prepared a large wall-hanging: pupils at Stapeley Broad Lane School prepared a tapestry and Pear Tree School pupils made a ceramic wall-hanging. We hope to be able to display both pieces of artwork in the community hall.

MEETINGS

The Parish Council meets monthly, on the first Thursday. Meetings are usually held at Broad Lane Methodist Chapel and start at 7.30 pm. We try to hold two each year at the local schools to try to encourage greater attendance by the public and we held our April meeting in the community hall.

During 2012, instead of the usual 12 meetings, we held 17 full Parish Council meetings, plus three Committees/Sub-Committees and four of the newly-formed Community Hall Management Committee. The additional full Parish Council meetings were mainly to address the significant planning issues which arose during the year.

We have two Public Question Time slots at each meeting and residents are able to ask a question or address the Parish Council.

PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY

The full complement of parish councillors is ten. At the time of writing, we have nine, but are hoping to co-opt to the remaining vacancy at the Annual Parish Council meeting on 9 May 2013 (Pear Tree School).

PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council plays a vital role in representing local issues and helping to improve the quality of life for parishioners. It provides the opportunity for people to influence decisions which touch their lives and also provides a "conduit" to the Borough Council.

Parish Council members are volunteers elected or co-opted to serve for a period of up to four years. They receive no payment.

They are a diverse group of individuals, all of whom are very enthusiastic and keen to represent the interests of local residents despite their own (sometimes pressing) business and personal commitments.

Some of the Members have special interests and have taken the initiative to lead on certain projects; for example, Mike Docker and Keith Nord (Speed Watch); Jo Hillman and Raj Samra (Website).

In October 2012 we co-opted two new councillors who had a particular interest in planning – Martin Malbon and John Davenport. John represented the Parish Council at the Strategic Planning Board meeting in April when he spoke against the Muller Group Homes' application. Martin also attended and spoke against the application, but in his capacity as a local resident rather than a Parish Councillor.

Those listed below were either elected or co-opted and will serve until the date of the next election. Parish Councillors can also be contacted by e-mail using the style:

firstname.surname@stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Sandy Gwinn-Freemantle	01270 619505
Raj Samra	07841 196 585
Shaun Clough	01270 629987
Mike Docker	01270 619855
John Davenport	01270 618971
Peter Groves	07597 978 831
Jo Hillman	07766 652 011
Keith Nord	01720 611204
Martin Malbon	07714 764 558

PARISH COUNCIL INFORMATION

The Parish Council has three notice-boards (1) outside Stapeley Broad Lane School; (2) outside the Co-Op Store on the Cronkinson shopping parade; and (3) outside the Community Hall.

The agenda for each meeting is displayed on the notice-boards (and the website) at least three clear days before the meeting, but for minutes and other information, please visit the Parish Council website, or contact the Clerk for details.

The Parish Council has a Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and most of the information to which members of the public are entitled is already on the website.

PARISH PLAN

It is the job of the Parish Plan Implementation Group (referred to above in the "Grants" section) to put into effect all those plans which have been identified as important to the community. The Group was formed in 2008 and is completely separate from the Parish Council, although there are two seats on SPAG for parish councillors. However, parish councillors are now focused on the operation of the community hall and there is currently no-one available to sit on SPAG. We hope that this will change in the not too distant future.

As noted earlier, the playground on the corner of Pear Tree Field at its junction with Peter de Stapleigh Way, is a scheme which was spear-headed by SPAG and proves to be a popular attraction. Further improvements are planned during the year.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Parish Council works in partnership with Cheshire East Council, the local Police through the Police Cluster meetings, the Nantwich Local Area Partnership (LAP) and the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC).

Each year we appoint parish councillors to each of these groups. The Nantwich LAP is made up of a series of working groups covering the environment, health, business, tourism, highways, youth, urban and rural transport. Unsurprisingly, the Highways Sub-Group is one of the most popular and is well-attended. The LAP membership comprises Cheshire East Councillors and Officers, representation from the Emergency Services, Charities (the Third Sector) and other service providers as well as interested Parish Councils. The link for the website is –

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/community_and_living/local_strategic_partnership/local_area_partnerships/nantwich_area_partnership.aspx

The Police Cluster meetings were set up several years ago and there are approximately 10 Parish Councils in each cluster. The purpose of the meetings is for the Police to hear from the parishes about their various concerns and priorities for policing and for the Police to report on their own priorities. ChALC is an independent body serving the needs of Parish and Town Councils (*Local Councils*) and representing their interests across Cheshire, providing advice, representation, networking opportunities and support to member councils.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Parish Council works closely with the two local primary schools and Mary Hennessey-Jones, the Head Teacher at Pear Tree School is a member of the Community Hall Management Committee.

There have also been occasions when Andy Cliffe, the Head Teacher at Brine Leas School, has addressed the Parish Council on matters of mutual interest.

PLANNING

One of the main consultative roles of parish councils, and of great importance, is to comment on local planning applications which may have a positive or detrimental impact on the community. The broad aim of the Parish Council in terms of planning is to keep Stapeley and Batherton a pleasant place to live, avoiding inappropriate development.

During 2012, the Parish Council took note of the groundswell of opinion against proposed developments in the parish, especially the proposed Muller Group Homes development in Stapeley and, in November 2012, took the decision to engage its own traffic consultant.

Bob Hindhaugh (a former Cheshire County Council Highways Engineer who is familiar with the parish) was appointed at a cost of £1,500. His company carried out a technical review of the traffic data which accompanied the Muller Group Homes' planning applications and the results were relied upon by Cheshire East Council Planning Officers to support their recommendation that the applications should be refused.

A sum of £5,000 has been added into the budget for 2013-2014 as a contingency, in the event of the need to undertake similar projects during the year.

During January and February 2013, the Borough Council carried out its next phase of consultation, as part of its preparation of the Local Plan, under the banner of "Shaping Our Future". The Parish Council held a special meeting to consider this one item and submitted its comments to Cheshire East Council. These comments can be viewed on the Cheshire East Council website (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) or on the Parish Council's website.

PUBLIC DEBATES

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, we are committed to continuing to hold Public Debates. These are usually a "free for all" but we do try to organise them into topics which we know are of concern to residents.

Please let us know if you have any ideas for debating.

SPEED WATCH

The two speed-watch schemes continue to operate. We have made a plea in the latest newsletter for volunteers for the "speed gun" scheme which is led by Irene Williams, a resident who operates the scheme on Broad Lane only.

The scheme can be extended to other parts of the parish, but needs to be volunteer-led.

The other part of speed-watch is the mobile vehicle-speed display units (we have two) which are moved around the parish at frequent intervals. We recently experienced some health and safety issues for the parish councillors who move this equipment, but we have now overcome these. You will probably have noticed that the units are being moved more frequently, which is key to the effectiveness of the scheme.

YOUNG PEOPLE

We are keen to try to engage young people more. One of the items for discussion at the annual meeting will be to identify someone who would be willing to operate a youth club, or similar activity, in the community hall.

If you are interested, let us know. If you have any ideas of how we can engage more effectively..... let us know!!

CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I would urge everyone in the parish to become involved in the community. Tell us what you want and we will work with you to try to resolve problems and provide new services, if we can.

Please try to attend our meetings if you have the opportunity. Don't wait for controversial planning applications to appear on the agenda! The most important part of the planning cycle is the work that goes on before a development plan is prepared and we were pleased that during the first and second phases of the Local Plan process, members of the public came to our meetings and told us what they wanted.

The next phase of the Local Plan starts in the Summer and you will have your opportunity to have a say as individuals, but also by attending Parish Council meetings.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS : 1 APRIL 2012 – 31 MARCH 2013

RECEIPTS	£
Opening balance on 1 April 2012	56,902.84
Precept from Cheshire East Council (CEC)	7,000.00
Grant from CEC	2,512.00
VAT Re-claim	1,395.65
Community Hall - hire charges	220.00
Bank Interest	51.89
TOTAL RECEIPTS	<u>68,082.38</u>

EXPENDITURE	£
Administration	
Clerk's Salary (net)	5,731.23
HMRC – Tax on Clerk's salary	1,478.40
CVS - payroll service (note: £48 relates to previous financial year)	144.00
Clerk's telephone	79.90
Clerk's expenses	387.84
Printing of newsletter (sponsored by Johnsons Printers)	309.00
Distribution of newsletter	432.00
Members	
Chairman's allowance	250.00
Expenses (travel and ink cartridges etc.)	240.15
Insurance/Audit/Subscriptions	
Insurance - annual premium	436.76
Cheshire Association of Local Councils - annual subscription	713.10
Audit Commission	342.00
Audit (Internal - JDH Business Services)	112.50
Room Hire	
Broad Lane Methodist Chapel (annual fee)	250.00
Pear Tree School	314.15
Community Carols	
	298.49
Website	
	562.50
Land at Talbot Way	
Specialist work on conservation area	405.00
Maintenance of lawned area	645.00
Speed Watch – purchase of additional equipment	
	6,960.00

EXPENDITURE		£
Training		
Clerk's training		30.00
Training for former parish councillor		30.00
Training - presentations skills (Clerk and Chairman)		262.50
Diamond Jubilee		
Purchase of commemorative coins for local primary school pupils		905.70
Street Lighting – electricity charges		211.05
Grants to Stapeley Parish Action Group		
Printing of refreshed Parish Plan		845.00
Third-party funding for playground scheme		957.77
Community Hall		
Legal advice		996.00
Cleaning		140.50
Expenses miscellaneous		14.09
Tables and chairs		2,487.38
Fire Equipment		114.56
Sundry supplies		140.41
Cooker, fridge, vacuum cleaner		619.95
Repair to front door lock		60.00
On-line booking system		72.00
Miscellaneous		
Technical review of transport data accompanying Muller Homes planning application		1,500.00
Land Talbot Way (fence ownership) – fee for Land Registry		5.00
Additional litter-bins on Cronkinson estate		708.70
Repairs to laptop computer		77.09
Dog-stencilling spray cans		84.58
TOTAL		<u>30,354.30</u>

BANK RECONCILIATION		£
Total Receipts		68,082.38
LESS Payments		-30,354.30
		<u>37,728.08</u>
Gold Account		38,026.83
Current Account		417.65
		<u>38,444.48</u>
LESS Unpresented cheques		-716.40
TOTAL (opening balance on 1 April 2013)		<u>37,728.08</u>