Chairman’s Report on the 2023-2024 Council Year

Presented to the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 May 2024

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Chairman of the Council
Stapeley and District Parish Council

Introduction

I am pleased to present this report, which provides an overview to Electors on the Council’s work over the past twelve months.

I would like to thank all Councillors for giving their time to Parish matters over the last year. From attending meetings, to working groups and tasks in the community, our work is varied and fulfilling. Thank you to Parish Councillors for all that they do for Stapeley and Batherton

The Council

In May 2023, the Council was enlarged from ten seats to twelve, reflecting the growing number of people choosing to live in our rural Parish. As of today, five of those seats are vacant and the Council is seeking to co-opt interested residents to fill them.

The Council is advised by the Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer who ensures the legal requirements of the Council are met. For nearly thirty years up until July 2023, Carol Jones fulfilled the role. Carol’s contribution over her time supporting the Council is greatly appreciated by all Councillors.

After Carol’s retirement, Wayne Salisbury was appointed to the role in March 2024. Wayne is already bringing his unique blend of practicality and efficiency to the role, to the benefit of all aspects of Council business. The Clerk is a part-time post and is the only permanent paid employee of the Council.

Neighbourhood Plan

You may recall that, after more than four years of work and collaboration between the Council, residents and local groups, a Neighbourhood Plan was adopted on 19 March 2018. The Plan continues to be a cornerstone of the Council’s review and submission of appropriate comments to the large volume of planning applications we are invited to comment upon. The Plan continues to inform planning decisions taken by our local planning authority, Cheshire East Council.

Planning

Amongst the numerous planning applications the Council is invited to consider, those for the development immediately South of Peter Destapleigh Way have yielded opportunities to change the design intent to better benefit both our community and future residents, in line with our Neighbourhood Plan. You may have seen that work on that development has started during the last year, and will be closely monitored for issues that impact our community.

Allotments

The Council continues to make contributions to the allotments of Nantwich Town Council, to enable residents to gain access to allotments, as there is currently no provision within the Parish.

Victorian Orchard

The Council's plans to restore and rejuvenate the Victorian Orchard were progressing well during the year, and are ready to act upon just as soon as the very knotty problem of identifying and transferring ownership from one of the many legacy developers has been ironed out with them and Cheshire East Council. We hope to see more substantive progress in the coming Council year.

Talbot Way Pond

Extensive work was undertaken in the last twelve months to create landscape plans to restore this pond area, both for the native wildlife and to make it more accessible to the community in a manner that educates whilst keeping people safe.

Parish Finances

The Council approved a budget for the 2023/24 financial year that was planned to enable delivery of the two projects I mentioned earlier, in addition to managing and maintaining our Community Hall, which is used by a wide variety of local groups throughout the week.

The total budget for 2023/24 was approximately £75,000, covered by the Precept, Reserves and income from hire of the Community Hall.

The end-of-year accounts will be presented by the Clerk to Council following the internal audit, and along with the report from the internal auditor and the approved annual governance and accountability return form.

Balances as of 31st March 2024 were £578.95 in the current account and £83,106.34 in the savings account which bring a total balance of £83,685.29.

The Parish is fortunate that Parish Councillors have continued with their voluntary contributions ranging from daily support to opening, closing and maintenance of the Community Hall, contributions to working groups and extensive planning application research. This contribution brings a direct saving to the Council and all residents

The 2024/25 Council Year

As we move into the 2023/24 Council year, I have no doubt that the Council will continue to work for the benefit of Stapeley and Batherton through service, dedication and commitment.

I have had the honour to Chair the Council for 6 fulfilling and enjoyable years. However all good things must come to an end, which is why I am standing down as Chair of the Council at this Evening's Annual Council meeting, which follows after this meeting at 19:30. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support, enthusiasm and patience which have made my time in office a pleasure. I wish the next Chair every success in the role.