



The Chairman's Report on the 2021/22 municipal year

**Presented to an assembly
of the Annual Parish Meeting
held on 26th April 2022**

Cllr Craig Bailey JP
Chairman of the Council
Willaston Parish Council

1.0 Introduction

This is the first report to be presented to a Parish Meeting since 2019 due to the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions. I am pleased to be able to present this report, which will provide an overview to Electors on the Council's work over the past twelve months.

I wish to thank all members of the Council for giving their time to Parish matters over the last twelve months. From attending meetings to completing tasks in the community our work is varied but I am sure they will all agree fulfilling. Thank you to Parish Councillors for all that they do for Willaston. I also wish to thank the Vice-Chairman for his continued support throughout the past year.

2.0 Make up of the Parish Council

There has been no change to the membership of the Council. However, in September 2021 Mr Martin Langhorn retired from the position of Clerk to the Council, a position he held for 15 years. We thank him for his hard work and dedication.

Between September 2021 and January 2022 Hannah Marr held the position of Clerk, which since her departure has been held on a temporary basis by Sue Togay who the Council thanks for her time and work given over recent months.

3.0 Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan continues to inform local planning decisions taken by the Local Planning Authority.

4.0 Planning

The number of planning applications within the village has increased significantly over the past two years, with 16 in 2019/20, 23 in 2020/21 and 31 in 2021/22 which is 35% increase on the previous year. There have been no new applications for large scale developments during the year. Works on the Bayley Croft and Cheerbrook Gardens developments are coming into their final stages with completion anticipated later this year. The Bayley Croft development continues to be closely monitored for issues which impact residents.

5.0 Traffic Management

Speeding remains a key concern within certain areas of the Parish and this continues to be monitored by Cheshire Police. Reports of non-compliant parking of vehicles is reported to the Police and Cheshire East Council. The Council's Speed Indicator Device was deployed on Moorfields for a period last year when concerns were raised by residents.

6.0 Local Police

PC Tim Clark continues to have responsibility for Willaston, who was assisted until last month by PCSO Sophie Bowman who has now left Cheshire Police. PCSO Bradley Siddall now covers the Parish.

The Council continues to work closely with the police who have provided valuable assistance in dealing with some issues of anti-social behaviour at the Playing Field.

For many years Cllr Todd represented the Council at the Wybunbury Police Cluster meetings. The cluster meetings have now come to an end, certainly for the time being. We thank Cllr Todd for his contributions in this role.

7.0 Littering and Dog Fouling

The lockdowns saw an increase in littering and dog fouling around the village.

A litter campaign was introduced in the Playing Field in Summer 2020 which has been maintained in 2021/22.

Daily litter picks are conducted by Councillors.

The dog fouling campaign launched in April 2021 has been effective in reducing fouling around the Parish. However, it has been noted that some residents may be mis-using the emergency dog waste bags provided. This is being actively monitored by Cllr Salisbury.

The Council would like to thank all residents and responsible dog owners for keeping the streets clean and free of dog fouling. Any continued fouling will be monitored, and information passed onto Cheshire East Civil Enforcement where fines of up to £1000 can be issued.

8.0 Willaston in Bloom

The Council provides floral displays throughout the Parish. Many of the displays are maintained by our contractor and other work is carried out by volunteers. Due to the pandemic we have not utilised public volunteers but are eager to bring new volunteers on board this year.

In 2022/23 the Council is committed to ensuring that landmark locations are planted and bring some colour and interest to the Parish, but unfortunately due to rising costs for planting, maintenance and watering, we will have to reduce some displays but hopefully we can assign them as community planters, looked after by those that live close by.

9.0 Lettie Spencer Playing Field

Following the investment made to the play area in 2020, in August 2021 new asphalt resurfacing was carried out in the playground area, ball court, path, and entrance drive thanks

to S106 monies. Floor graphic games and ball court markings were also added. New benches have been installed in the playground area by Cllr Keegan and Cllr Lane. The football pitch has been closed for several weeks whilst new turf and seed establishes. The pitch will be reopened in the coming weeks.

After a period of closure due to damage, the zip wire is now back in use. The damage was caused by misuse which can be prevented if the zip wire is used appropriately: only one person on the zipwire at a time. Unfortunately, there have been further acts of vandalism including damage to trees by removing branches and stripping bark. In March 2022 a memorial tree was planted on the Playing Field.

The Playing Field has now completed 3 years of opening and closing to a resolved schedule. This has helped to reduce anti-social behaviour and to keep this facility actively managed on a daily basis for the benefit of all residents. Particular thanks to Cllr Webb and Cllr Salisbury for their daily contribution to this.

10.0 Maurice's Maze

After a consultation it was decided to rename The Maze as Maurice's Maze. This is to honour the late Maurice Jones, Past-Chairman of Willaston Parish Council, and a dedicated councillor for 43 years as well as the last full-term Mayor of Crewe & Nantwich Borough Council.

Maurice was passionate about providing facilities for younger people, so it is appropriate that this space bears his name. Although the original maze is no longer there, Maurice was keen that the space should still have some form of maze, which has been painted on the floor. A formal dedication ceremony and renaming took place on 25th September 2021 attended by The Mayor, councillors and the Jones family where a place name sign was unveiled and a memorial tree dedicated.

11.0 Mike Heywood Green

The Christmas Lights were put up on Mike Heywood Green in November 2021 which provided the annual festive and very welcome atmosphere for the duration of the Christmas season. After a two year break we were delighted to see a return to Carols on the Green. It was great to see such a fantastic turnout of around 250 residents who joined us for this festive evening of carols and mulled wine.

In March 2022 the Mike Heywood Memorial sign was renewed. Thanks to Cllr Keegan for arranging this project and for leading on the work, assisted by Cllr Lane.

12.0 Allotments

The allotments continue to be very popular and there is currently a waiting list for plots.

Best Allotment judging took place in summer 2021 with awards being made in early 2022.

In August 2021 the Council were approached by VX Fibre who wished to install a communications unit behind the bus shelter. The Council was pleased to successfully negotiate for improvements to be made to the access drive and parking for allotment users at no cost to residents or tenants. This work is ongoing and is yet to be signed off.

13.0 Civic Service

The Council held its Civic Service on 12th March 2022 at St John's Methodist Church, this was a well-attended and well received event with a special performance from the Willaston Primary Academy Choir. The service marked the 125 years of the Council and featured a display of original minutes and declarations of office. £185 was collected and donated to the DEC Ukraine Appeal.

13.0 Remembrance Service

Residents came together on the 14th November 2021 for the Willaston Act of Remembrance. We were pleased to once again be able to hold a full service after our scaled back ceremony in 2020. The service was led by Revd Paul North & Revd Sarah Butcher. Residents were joined by Cllr Sarah Pochin, Mayor of Cheshire East, other dignitaries and community organisations. We were honoured that this was the only other Remembrance Service in the Borough attended by The Mayor in addition to her own ward. Willaston Scouts were in attendance and laid crosses for every person named on the War Memorial.

14.0 Book Box

The Book Box continues to be well used and appreciated by residents, although there are a small number of issues of misuse and anti-social behaviour. Thanks to Cllr Keegan for his daily attention in keeping the book box in order as well as storing all surplus stock.

15.0 Stores Corner Bus Shelter

A new bench was provided within the bus shelter for residents which is being well used by residents whilst waiting for a bus or when walking through the Parish. Thanks to Cllrs Keegan and Lane for installing the bench.

16.0 The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

In August 2021 the Council created a Platinum Jubilee Committee which is chaired by Cllr Cutts to co-ordinate how Willaston will celebrate this event. The Committee is working hard to arrange three events: Celebration Launch with Flag Raising, A Service of Thanksgiving and the Willaston Jubilee Garden Party. A Souvenir programme will be published in the coming weeks which will be delivered to every household in the Parish.

17.0 Parish Finances

The precept increased from £24,000 to £25,520 in 2021/22 in line with current tax base arrangements, thereby maintaining the Band D Council Tax at the current level. Total balances as of 30th March 2022 were £11,308.68 and £33,860.51.

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

18.0 Honorary Freewoman of the Parish of Willaston

At an extraordinary meeting of the Council on the 29th of June 2021, the title of Honorary Freewoman was conferred on Mrs Edith Ridgway. A private presentation was made on Saturday 3rd July 2021 at Brookfield House where Mrs Ridgway now resides. The Honorary Freeman and Freewoman title is the highest honour an individual can receive from local government. Mrs Ridgway's level of dedication and length of volunteering is extraordinary, and she has without-a-doubt made a positive impact on enriching the lives of veterans, and the people of Willaston for over 65 years.

19.0 Civic Representation

Over the course of the past year I was pleased to accept invitations as Chairman and attend the following 12 engagements representing the Council;

- Restoration of the Willaston WI sign
- Presentation of Honorary Freewoman Mrs Ridgway
- Dedication Ceremony of Maurice's Maze
- Nantwich Civic Service
- Willaston WI AGM
- Funeral Service for Revd. Sambrook
- Remembrance Day
- Nantwich Remembrance Sunday Service
- Willaston Act of Remembrance
- Carols on the Green
- Commonwealth Day Flag Raising Ceremony
- Willaston Civic Service

20.0 Conclusion

As we move into the 2022/23 municipal year, the Council will continue to work for the benefit of the Parish of Willaston through service, dedication and commitment.