



The Chairman`s Report on the 2022/23 municipal year

**Presented to an assembly
of the Annual Parish Meeting
held on 10 May 2023**

Cllr Craig Bailey JP
Chairman of the Council
Willaston Parish Council

1.0 Introduction

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.

2.0 Make up of the Council

In January the Vice-Chairman of the Council, Councillor Colin Todd sadly passed away. Councillor Todd served on the Council for over 18 years. He held the office of Vice-Chairman for at least 12 years and was acting Chairman in 2011. He sat for several years on various committees and represented the Council at police cluster meetings, local planning authority meetings and at ChALC. He was the lead author of policy statements within the Neighbourhood Plan and he had an excellent working knowledge on all planning matters. At the appropriate time the Council will consider a memorial to Councillor Todd.

The Council is advised by the Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer who ensures the legal requirements of the Council are met. Sue Togay was appointed to the role in May 2022. The Clerk is a part-time post and is the only permanent paid employee of the Council.

3.0 Neighbourhood Plan

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

4.0 Planning

The number of planning applications within the Parish in 2021/22 was 31 and in 2022/23 there were also 31 applications notified. The Council is a planning consultee, and it considers each application and decides whether to submit a supporting comment, objections or no objections. 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 planning officer sign-off anticipated in the coming months. 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.

6.0 Local Police

PC Tim Clark and PCSO Bradley Siddall have now left Cheshire Police. PCSO Dan Walley now covers Willaston along with PC Oliver Kennedy Harris.

The Council continues in its endeavor to work closely with the police in dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour.

7.0 Littering and Dog Fouling

The litter campaign introduced in the Playing Field in Summer 2020 will be once again maintained in 2023 with replacement signage being installed. 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. In 2022/23 there has been a significant increase in the number of residents volunteering to assist in Willaston in Bloom. We would like to thank those residents who have volunteered their time to help maintain the floral displays around the Parish. It is truly great to see this sense of community spirit in action in the Parish.

In 2023/24 the Council is committed to ensuring that landmark locations are planted and bring some colour and interest to the Parish.

9.0 Lettie Spencer Playing Field

The playing field continues to be a popular and much valued community asset. For 2023 we have introduced a re-wilding belt on the boundary of the playing field to encourage wildlife and enhance the local ecosystem through greater connectivity.

In February a London Plane tree was planted at the playing field in memory of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The tree was planted by children of the Parish and The tree will now form part of The Queen's Green Canopy.

The Playing Field has now completed 4 years of opening and closing to a resolved schedule. This has helped to reduce anti-social behavior and to keep this facility actively managed daily for the benefit of all residents by Cllrs Salisbury, Webb and myself. I would like to express my thanks to Cllr Salisbury and Cllr Webb for their daily contribution to this task.

The Council has developed a clearer understanding of its Byelaws and their enforcement. Byelaws are in place to protect and promote the appropriate use and enjoyment of the playing field for all users. Soon signage will be erected to provide additional guidance to dog owners as part of this.

11.0 Mike Heywood Green and The Spinney

Mike Heywood Green continues to be the centerpiece and heart of the Parish and is used for several community events throughout the year. The Christmas Lights were put up on Mike Heywood Green in November 2022 which provided the annual festive and very welcome atmosphere for the duration of the Christmas season.

Both Mike Heywood Green and The Spinney are maintained by the Council and plans are in place for benches on the Green to be replaced in the coming weeks.

12.0 Allotments

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

Best Allotment judging took place in summer 2022 with the Best Allotment Cup being awarded to Janet Twigg.

There have been issues of anti-social behavior occurring on the allotment car park at night which have been reported to the police. The Council will continue to work with police in addressing these issues which have no place in our community.

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. There were issues with the finish of the work which the late Councillor Todd was dealing with. The Clerk will follow up on this matter.

12.0 War Memorial and Remembrance Service

In 2023 the Council plans to undertake works to resurface the pavement around the war memorial and to also replace the bench.

In November the community came together for the Willaston Act of Remembrance. The service was led by Revd Mike Turnbull & Revd Sarah Butcher. Residents were joined by dignitaries and community organisations and wreaths were laid at the War Memorial to remember those fallen. A prayer for Ukraine was read to remind us to think those who are currently enduring conflict. Willaston Scouts were in attendance and laid crosses for every person named on the War Memorial.

13.0 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 former councilor Nigel Keegan for his daily attention in keeping the book box in order as well as storing all surplus stock.

14.0 The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Platinum Jubilee Committee organised a series of events over the long bank holiday weekend to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. A souvenir Programme was delivered to every household in the Parish.

Celebrations kicked off with a launch event on Thursday 2nd June on Mike Heywood Green where around 150 people enjoyed cake & fizz. One of our Programme cover artists, Oliver, raised the flag, which with the plaque, creates a lasting memorial to the Jubilee and to The Queen.

On Friday 3rd June a short Thanksgiving Service was held on Maurice's Maze. This was attended by about 50 residents. The service was led by Revd Mike Turnbull and Revd Sarah Butcher.

The Jubilee Garden Party was held on Saturday 4th June on Lettie Spencer Playing Field. This was attended by up to 2500 residents. This free entry event provided stage entertainment, market stalls, children's sports, a dog show as well as food and drink vendors. Local organisations such as Willaston History Group, Scouts, Brownies, WI, Pre-School, South

Cheshire Model Engineering, Nantwich Lions all had stalls and Cheshire Police & Fire Service were also present to engage with the community.

Thanks to all who attended and those who volunteered to help make the events a success. I would particularly like to thank the Jubilee Committee for their tireless work in making such a memorable series of events.

15.0 Willaston Events Committee

Following the success of the Platinum Jubilee Garden Party, in June an Events committee was created to plan for a schedule of events throughout the year.

On the 15th December our popular “Carols on the Green” event took place on Mike Heywood Green. Our 2022 event saw temperatures dropping to down to -8 degrees, so the mulled wine was more than welcome for those hardy residents who joined us!

On 5th May to kick start the festivities of the Coronation, the Committee hosted an event on Mike Heywood Green. Complimentary Cakes and fizz were well received by all! We were pleased to be joined by His Majesty’s High Sheriff of Cheshire Dennis Dunn MBE JP DL. On 8th May as part of The Big Help Out 22 residents joined us for a community litter pick around the Parish followed by complimentary hot drinks and cake. The Committee is planning for further community litter pick days this year.

The Committee is currently busy planning for the Garden party on 15th July, which I am sure will be as much as, if not more of a success than last years!

I thank the Committee for their commitment in bringing the community together for these exciting events. Undertaking such events is not for the lighthearted and requires a significant amount of time and energy which is appreciated.

16.0 Parish Finances

In November 2021, with an amendment in January 2022, the Parish Council set and approved the budget for the Council year of 2022/23. This budget saw some increases to allow the Council to carry out some necessary works, bring some further investment to the village, as well as deliver plans to celebrate The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

The total budget was £57,620. This budget will be covered by Precept (57%) Reserves (38%) Allotment income (3%) and Willaston in Bloom Sponsorship (2%). The precept increased from £25,208 to £32,703.

The end-of-year accounts will be presented by the Clerk to Council at the June meeting 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 2023 were £4,377.25 in the current account and £35,152.93 in the business account which bring a total balance of £39,530.18

The Parish is fortunate that Parish Councillors have continued with their voluntary contributions ranging from daily management of the playing field, repairs, and maintenance around the village to extensive planning application research. This contribution brings a direct saving to the Council and all residents.

17.0 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;

- Jubilee Launch
- Service of Thanksgiving for The Queen
- Jubilee Garden Party
- Nantwich Civic Service (represented by the Clerk)
- Remembrance Day
- Nantwich Remembrance Sunday Service
- Willaston Act of Remembrance
- Carols on the Green
- Funeral of The Vice-Chairman of the Council
- Tree planting ceremony for Queen Elizabeth II
- Funeral of Honorary Freewoman Mrs Edith Ridgway
- Coronation Celebration

18.0 Conclusion

As we move into the 2023/24 municipal year and a new four-year term for Parish Councilors, I have no doubt that the Council will continue to work for the benefit of the Parish of Willaston through service, dedication and commitment.