

## Parish Council Annual Report 2024

Welcome to the Annual Parish Council report where we look back at the activities undertaken by the Parish Council over the last year. As Chair of the Parish Council for 2 years now, and a member of the team for some 7 years, I think right at the offset of this report it is worth reminding people that all our councillors who contribute to the Parish Council are volunteers. They give up their time willingly for the benefit of our village, and they do this because they love the village where they live.

I would like to personally thank every one of the councillors for their time, commitment, and support into making our Parish Council a meaningful and productive group to be a part of.

Last year we reported on the activities that had been completed as part of our areas of accountability that we each own. However, this year I would like to do it slightly differently as there have been a few projects that have taken significant amounts of time and effort and therefore they require some focus.

Firstly, the Parish Council have undertaken the significant, detailed, and time-consuming task of performing a review and refresh of our Neighbourhood Plan. This activity has been performed in conjunction with our planning consultants, Urban Vision, and we would like to formally thank Urban Vision for their support, without whom this task would have been impossible to complete.

We are approaching the end of this process, and our new draft plan already holds legal weight in relation to any planning applications that are made. The final stages will be when a referendum is held within the village to allow residents to have the final say on the adoption of the new draft plan.

The new plan introduces a new 'Green Space' to the village with the introduction of the Denstone Meadow, and re-words our policies to reduce any ambiguity where it previously existed. All in all, a great piece of work to support our village into the future and thanks to all the people involved in making this happen.

Another substantial project that was undertaken this year was the improvements made to the War Memorial at the heart of our village. As many of you will have seen, the paving around the memorial had suffered over the years and despite all the efforts from our lengthsman team the weeds continued to grow in between the stones. The Parish Council went to tender with 3 companies to quote on improving this area and back in the summer the job was completed, and a great improvement was made. Thanks to Councillor Flower for overseeing this job for us each day and being the liaison point for the contractors. Also, thanks to the Sports Trust for allowing us to use their water supply for this work. I think you will all agree the war memorial looks a lot smarter.

Sadly, the war memorial along with the rest of the village, continue to face the ongoing issue of what now seems to be very regular flooding. It is so dis-heartening when there is so much done in the village to maintain and improve the appearance and then on several times through the year we see significant amounts of flood water, that brings the mud from the surrounding fields and leave that mess behind as the water subsides.

I would like to thank all those who are continually involved in helping the 'clear up' on these occasions. We welcomed Stuart Smith to our team this year as our new lengthsman, and along

with his normal duties, Stuart has always been on hand after a storm to come and help us clear up along with Colin and Mick Wainwright and also Robert Saint from RTS who have all given their time FOC, great thanks to you all.

Our Highways liaison work continues under the leadership of Cllr Shermer. We have had a team from Staffs County Council here in the village on more than one occasion looking at how traffic flow, parking and safety can be improved. SCC agreed to perform a feasibility study and to come back with proposals that we can share with the village to aid all the points mentioned. Sadly, this report is taking longer than planned and we still await the content, however Cllr Shermer is in frequent contact with SCC and as soon as we have an update we will report back.

On the subject of Highways, Cllr Flower, Cllr Ratcliffe, our Clerk Julie Sadler and myself held a very productive meeting with a team from JCB at their headquarters in the Spring to relay to them the information that we had on speed and volume data from our SIDS in Stubwood. This was a very successful meeting and JCB were thrilled that we were proactive with the data and utilising the SIDs in the best way, after all JCB did provide £5000 towards their installation.

The SIDs have been so successful in helping to slow down the traffic that we are looking into the possibility of more in the village. Watch this space.

There have been many other smaller projects that are ongoing with our team, including the ongoing support for the play area thanks to Cllr Flower, work on the War memorial and bus stop thanks to Cllr Edmonds, continued work on the Staffs Way thanks to Cllr Wright.

We have seen some lovely celebrations in our village this year, Cllr Stratton is our liaison with the Village Hall committee and we saw the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration this year which was great. Our Village Hall is a real asset at the heart of our community and it is fabulous as well to see it looking so smart with the new cladding that the Village Hall committee raised the funds for and got installed.

Also, we saw the college celebrate their 150-year anniversary and they invited all members of the parish to attend their celebration in June, which was fantastic. Cllr Shermer and Cllr Edmonds have regular meetings with the Head of the College and their ongoing support for our community is much appreciated. It is also noted, that despite increased number of students over the last 12 months, the actual volume of traffic in the village is reduced thanks to Lottes's traffic strategy.

All in all, we have had another fabulous year, we have welcomed 2 new members to our team with Stuart and Cllr Craig Naylor and we look forward to working with them more over the coming year ahead.

I would again like to thank all my fellow councillors, for their continued hard work and support, specific thanks also to Cllr Jo Mountney for her ongoing and substantial support as Vice Chair and of course to our Parish Clerk – Julie Sadler who without her things would not be possible. She keeps us all on track and progresses all the activity on our behalf.

Finally, I would also like to thank all the members of the public who come to support us at each meeting and with activities in the village throughout the year.