

Davenham Parish Council
Chairman's Annual Report 2014-2015
Monday 11th May 2015

It is my pleasure to write the Chairman's Annual Report for this year in what has been 12 months of significant progress for Davenham Parish Council. For the first time in a number of years we have had a full team of nine Councillors serving the community. On behalf of myself and the whole community of Davenham I want to formally express my thanks and gratitude for all the hard work, expertise and time the Councillors have given voluntarily over and above their own work and family commitments during the last 12 months.

This year has seen a number of large steps forward in the work of the Parish Council.

We have continued to manage and improve the Parish assets of Butchers Stile and Laburnum Road, replacing the path in Laburnum Road field and organising regular gardening, maintenance and safety checks on all equipment. We successfully secured a grant to repair and clean the War Memorial with a significant proportion of the costs being funded outside of the Parish budget. This work was carried out with great care and it was a pleasure to return this important memorial back into the best order possible. As summer approaches we're looking to have the railings around the Memorial repainted to finish off this refurbishment.

While balancing all the views of the stakeholders within the village the Parish Council worked with CWAC Highways to implement phase one of a new 20mph speed limit in the centre of the village. Phase two is planned and this will extend the 20mph limit to other parts of the village as well as adding road markings to try and reduce speeding. The Parish Council organised speed monitoring in key locations and we are very thankful to the members of the public, Clerk & Councillors who gave up their time to monitor vehicles with a speed gun to raise awareness of the new limit and try to influence driver behaviour.

As I reflect on the last 12 months I cannot stress strongly enough the volume of work that has been undertaken to prepare, write and consult the community in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan. A smaller sub-group of Councillors have worked throughout the year to constantly move this project forward and keep the community engaged in the process, highlighted during the open meeting a few months ago. This work has been progressing amid the backdrop of the ongoing planning challenges we face as a village. The Parish Council continues to assess, comment and often oppose a number of proposed large scale developments. Through the Neighbourhood Planning process we have identified the type and scale of development the community would like to see in Davenham. We continue to bear as much influence as possible within the formal CWAC planning process by formally representing the views of the people of Davenham & Whatcroft parish in response to all planning applications.

Through the CWAC Community Governance Review the boundary of the existing Parish was redrawn to the east eastern boundary and came into effect on 1st April 2015. We welcome the new properties and residents into the Parish and encourage you to speak with us on any matters of concern, noting the proximity of the proposed HS2 train line to your location.

Turning to more social topics it was great to see the village Carnival on again last June and the Parish Council was happy to support this event with a grant to fund the policing of the road closure required for the parade. In December we were able to organise a bigger and better event to switch on the Christmas tree lights than in recent years. The mild weather

meant the primary school choir and members of Bostock Band were able to perform and we are grateful to them, a number of local businesses & both pubs in supporting the celebrations. As the usual traffic in London Road ground to a halt it felt like the whole village was in attendance this year & we hope the event was enjoyable for all.

Over the last 12 months the members of Parish Council have made a deliberate, conscious effort to offer better, more open engagement with the community and we regularly have a large number of members of the public join us to ask questions and receive updates at the start of our monthly meeting. At times of specific planning issues this number has been overwhelming for the relatively small meeting room, and we're very grateful for the patience of the public who come to talk with us as we work through this section of the meeting. At the same time we have tried to work more closely with the Junior Football Club, Bowling Club and Cricket Club to balance the needs of the different community groups who use the Parish facilities and hope this closer working relationship continues in the future & extends to all. As an example, we were asked and worked closely with Davenham Cricket Club to amend The Parish Council lease which was a critical factor to enable the Club to secure funding for the significant redevelopment work they have planned. We look forward to seeing the improved facilities for this thriving local Club.

On behalf of the Parish Council I'd like to recognise a formal note of gratitude and thanks to our Ward Councillors who regularly attend our meetings. You have been a source of information and support throughout the year and especially with the planning process as well as offering budget support to many ad hoc projects.

Davenham is a relatively low crime area and we hope this remains as we continue to part fund the PCSO along with Mouton Parish Council. The PCSO accounts for a significant part of the annual budget and the Council was pleased to recommend no increase to the precept for the upcoming financial year and work efficiently within a flat budget to deliver our responsibilities. For public record the Parish Council supported local bodies and community groups with grants amounting to around 4% of the total budget through the formal grant application process.

Finally I start to close with some direct thanks to specific individuals. We had a change of Clerk during the last year and I must take this opportunity to thank our previous Clerk, Janet Donnellan, for her work with the Council. I'm also grateful for Janet's continued support after her employment finished in supporting our new Clerk, Vicky Stock, to get up to speed and help with any ad hoc questions. The Parish Council could not operate effectively without the Clerk managing many of the day to day responsibilities, delivery of tasks and communication with the public. We are very thankful Vicky joined us in taking on this important role and is doing an excellent job keeping everything moving forward. At the same time I'd like to express my thanks to the Vice Chair from the last year, Katie Mattinson. Katie has not only been a great support for me to discuss decisions and issues with day to day, but has also been a leading member of the group delivering such a high volume of work in the Neighbourhood Plan.

As this Council's term of office finishes I must mention the three Councillors who are standing down. Myself and Suzanne are standing down as Councillors after a mere 3-4 years in role, whereas Councillor Brian Robinson is leaving the Council with over 30 years' service to the community of Davenham. As highlighted in the recent article from the Northwich Guardian Brian has been a great servant to the Parish of Davenham and I'm sure I speak on behalf of the whole community in thanking Brian for his decades of work as a Councillor.

As the new Parish Council forms we are pleased to welcome Elton Watson as a Councillor and I'm sure Elton's recent experience as a CWAC Ward Councillor will be immensely useful for our local community. These changes also highlight that there are currently two vacancies on the Parish Council as we enter the new term of office. Having a full team of Councillors and an enthusiastic Clerk really is **the** important component that enables the Parish Council to manage the day to day responsibilities and deliver the large projects required. As I sign off this report I am hopeful a few members of the community will step forward in the near future to be co-opted to serve on the Parish Council, which is a sometimes challenging but always very rewarding experience.

Councillor Andy Duff
Chairman 2014 / 2015
11th May 2015