

Davenham Parish Council  
Chairman's Annual Report 2016-2017  
Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017

It has been another incredibly busy year for Davenham Parish Council, thankfully without the numerous 'new large scale development' applications that have preoccupied us in recent years. This has allowed our dedicated team of Councillors to concentrate on the usual responsibilities of a Parish Council. On behalf of myself and the community of Davenham and Whatcroft, I want to formally express my thanks and gratitude for all the hard work, time and dedication our Councillors have given during the last 12 months. All completed in volunteer hours, over and above work and family commitments.

Throughout the year, we have continued to manage and improve our Parish assets, with regular gardening, maintenance and safety checks on all equipment. We are currently working on quotations to help with drainage issues on both Laburnum playing field and Butchers Stile and hope to have work starting on Laburnum shortly. In the meantime, we are very happy to report that Laburnum playing field has now received Fields in Trust status, protecting this as a public outdoor space for future generations.

Following extensive repair works and refurbishment in 2015, we were very pleased to hear from Historic England last summer to advise us that our War Memorial, at the junction of London Road and Hartford Road, had been added to their list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and is now Grade II listed.

After a few teething problems, our defibrillator in the village centre (on the side wall of Willowgreen) has been up and running for a while now. Due to the strong community spirit within our parish, the training sessions on the use of the defib have been very well attended and I'm sure there will be more opportunities to attend in the future. Keep an eye on village newsletters for future dates.

In addition to the regular maintenance duties of a Parish Council, looking back over the last 12 months I am once again amazed at the volume of work that has been undertaken by our small team of volunteers. Although we have not been subject to the number of new large scale development applications as in recent years, planning has continued to be a challenge. Throughout the year, the Parish Council has assessed and commented on just under 40 different planning applications as well as submitting comments on HS2 and ensuring that previously approved developments are carried out as expected. As I'm sure many people are aware, work is starting on developments on Church Street and Fountain Lane. The Parish Council will continue to work with residents and developers to ensure these works are carried out with as little disruption to village life as possible.

Unexpected parish issues are brought to our attention by residents all through the year, many of which are sadly out of our control as they fall under Cheshire West and Cheshire Council. As a Parish Council, we try our hardest to represent the views and wishes of our residents but unfortunately, we do not always have the manpower or funding to be able to resolve every issue. This is becoming more of a problem as budget cuts within CWAC, in areas such as highways etc., have more of an impact on parishes such as ours. It is worth noting that our Parish Council received a total of just £24,986.51 from the precept in 2016/17, to run, maintain and insure our village assets including Butchers Stile field, Laburnum Road playing field, the village garden, the war memorial and the Fountain, as well as paying for all the administrative costs of running a council. We have however worked with CWAC to assist on several issues raised by residents.

To name a few:

- In response to concerns about rising traffic volumes on Church Street, we conducted a survey with residents and have shared the findings with CWAC
- We have started the process for a Polling Station review as parents raised concerns about the number of days Davenham Primary School had to close for voting
- A survey has been completed on damaged grass verges throughout the village with Parish Council funds being reserved to schedule repairs over the coming years
- Flashing speed signs are in the process of being purchased for areas of speeding concern throughout the village. Again, the costs will have to be spread over the coming years
- As a result of the Hilltop Farm development in Kingsmead, residents in Hartford Road have experienced issues with motorists using the service road to avoid waiting at the new traffic lights. The Parish Council have worked with CWAC and are hoping to have the end of the service road closed soon
- As traffic continues to build throughout the village centre, residents have asked once again for a pedestrian crossing of some sort. The Parish Council, with help from our Ward Councillors, funded a traffic survey to monitor footfall etc. Sadly, the findings still report that there is not enough footfall to warrant a pedestrian crossing at this time

This year has also seen the final submission of the largest project undertaken by the council in recent years. We are very happy to announce that the Davenham and Whatcroft Neighbourhood Plan has been formally submitted to Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) and is now in their hands for final examination. The Neighbourhood Plan working group spent many months giving due consideration to all previous consultation comments, with professional advice sought from Cheshire Community Action Group (CCAG) and CWAC as well as an Independent examiner, to ensure that the submitted plan is as robust as possible. Our thanks must go to Richard Thresh at CCAG and Charlotte Aspinall at CWAC for all their support throughout this very long and difficult process. As a result of this hard work and due diligence, we are now hoping that the examiner will pass the plan and put it forward for referendum shortly. This is the culmination of many years of community engagement and support and we would like to thank everybody who completed a survey, questionnaire or attended a meeting throughout this time. The plan has been written to help our Parish develop in a way that is acceptable to our residents over the coming years, protecting our green space and village identity as much as possible. We hope to see as many of you as possible when the referendum is called to vote 'yes' on the Davenham and Whatcroft Neighbourhood Plan.

On the more social side of village life, it was great to see the village Carnival last summer and the Parish Council was happy to support this event once again with the use of Butchers Stile field. Year on year we have seen an increase in the number of residents attending the switch on of the village Christmas tree lights. Again, this event included the primary school choir and members of the Leftwich School Band who were joined by singers from Davenham Players. We are very grateful to them and all the local businesses who supported the celebrations. Whilst we had fantastic feedback on the event we are still working to ensure that the sound on the night works for everybody and have made a few changes for the event in 2017. Members of the Parish Council also supported the British Legion Poppy appeal, funding the cost of refreshments for all who attended the Remembrance Day service.

The Parish Council continues to make a conscious effort to offer better, more open engagement with the community and we regularly have members of the public join us to

ask questions and receive updates at the start of our monthly meeting. Our e-mail list is always growing and is a valuable tool enabling us to get information to our residents quickly and easily. The lack of a Village/Community Hall continues to be an issue for the whole community and we are still on the lookout for a suitable plot of land for this. In the meantime, we continue to meet regularly with St Wilfrids Church for updates on their Church Hall.

As we mentioned last year, we are always reminded of the huge amount of Community Spirit and Pride that exists within the parish. Because of this, last year we made the decision to enter the Community Pride Awards, nominating The Mosaic Project for the overall community project award. The judges visited the village in June last year and a great number of our community groups met with them to discuss why they felt we should be considered for an award. It was truly heartening to hear such warm comments about our community and we all left feeling that Davenham Parish was the best place to be. So, we attended the awards in October with very high hopes. Unfortunately, we came away empty handed and incredibly disappointed on the night, but with a renewed faith in our wonderful community. The judges obviously just did not spend enough time here!

Davenham continues to be a relatively low crime area, with our main area of crime involving 'drive-offs' from the petrol station. Throughout the year the Council made the decision to stop part funding a PCSO for the village. This was due to a number of factors, not least of which was a financial saving for our residents. This funding decision should have no impact on the level of Police cover we have within the parish. This financial saving was countered by a number of rising ongoing maintenance costs, so the Council felt it was not necessary to increase to the precept for the upcoming financial year. For public record the Parish Council supported local bodies and community groups with grants amounting to around 5% of the total budget through the formal grant application process. Local groups receiving grants this year were; Davenham Athletic, Davenham Bowling Club, Davenham WI, 1<sup>st</sup> Davenham Rainbows, 1<sup>st</sup> Davenham Scouts, Beavers and Cubs and Davenham Players.

On behalf of the Parish Council I'd like to recognise a formal note of gratitude and thanks once again to our Ward Councillor Helen Weltman, who regularly attends our meetings. Helen continues to be a source of information and support throughout the year.

Before I finish, I would like to thank some specific individuals. Firstly, our truly dedicated Parish Clerk, Vicky Stock. The Parish Council could not operate effectively, efficiently and within the rules without the Clerk managing many of the day to day responsibilities, delivery of tasks and communication with the public. I've said it before and I'll say it again, we would be lost without you Vicky! At the same time, I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the Vice Chair from the last year Elton Watson. Elton's previous experience as a ward councillor has not only given him a wealth of experience and information, making him an invaluable asset to our Parish Council, but has allowed him to be 'the voice of reason' in my head, offering support for me to discuss the many ongoing decisions and issues of running a Parish Council. I cannot think of a better and more qualified person to take over the reins.

As I come to the end of my 2 years as Chair of Davenham Parish Council, I reflect on the meetings we have had, the often-thankless tasks we are asked to resolve, the many long-winded discussions on repeat subjects that often make you feel like it is Groundhog day, the increasing letters of thanks from residents, the unfailing resilience of this team and their passion for the Parish and ultimately, the laughs we have had along the way.

As I (and Abraham Lincoln) have been known to say, you can please some of the people some of the time, all of the people some of the time, some of the people all of the time but you can never please all of the people all of the time.”

Our aim is to please most of the people most of the time and I sincerely hope we’ve done that over the last year.

Councillor Katie Mattinson  
Chairman 2015 - 2017  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017