

It has been another challenging yet productive year for Davenham Parish Council. Thanks to the dedication of the Neighbourhood Plan working group and the valuable input received from consultation with residents we were successful in our submission of the Davenham & Whatcroft Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan was subjected to independent scrutiny and was found to be sound in the reasoning and evidence for its policies. The successful submission means that this strategic document has been formally adopted and developers must refer to and comply with the plan when considering any proposals for house building in Davenham & Whatcroft. Planning Officers must also give the plan weight in any decisions relating to development in Davenham or Whatcroft.

The painstaking work to produce the Neighbourhood Plan spanned many months and whilst the whole of the working group contributed a great deal of effort and time, I must single out Cllr Gareth Peel and Cllr Arthur Wood for their help in producing a well-researched and cogent plan that will help defend our community from further inappropriate development for years to come.

Building work continues at both the Fountain Lane and Church Street sites which were approved at appeal prior to the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan. Unfortunately, this has led to disruption and traffic issues for residents and we have encouraged people to contact Cheshire West and Chester Council to report any unsafe practices or non-compliance of planning conditions, such as delivery of goods or materials out-with approved times.

Despite the challenges new development brings, the Parish continues to be an attractive, vibrant and friendly place to live with an active community. Earlier on in this year Davenham residents volunteered to involve themselves in the Pink poo campaign, with the aim of reducing the amount of dog fouling in the village. Their action helped make Davenham a cleaner and healthier community and such action demonstrates that aside from a minority of irresponsible dog owners, the residents of this community care about their local environment and are willing to take action to protect it.

The Parish Council continues to raise concerns and lobby Cheshire West and Chester Council regarding issues over the condition and safety of our footpaths and roads. After many years of seeking action over the state of the verges in Mount Pleasant, and although the maintenance of highways is exclusively the responsibility of Cheshire West and Chester Council, in order to resolve this issue we agreed to part fund from our limited budget widening of the footpath to cover the most badly damaged verges to improve the local area.

The New traffic lights constructed on the A556 for the development at Hill Top Grange in Kingsmead resulted in safety issues at the end of Hartford Road and after much persuasion we were able to convince the Local Authority Highway engineers to take action and close of the junction at the end of the access road. Although a number of near misses had been reported, luckily the closure of the junction was carried out before any accidents occurred.

Last summer we had fantastic feedback from the children of our community in relation to the type of improvements they would like to see at Butchers Stile playing fields and we have

used this feedback to develop plans for the improvement of the football pitch and play facilities.

At Laburnum Road park we are in the process of installing new memorial gates and fencing, which is being funded in partnership with the Welcome Home Trust, whilst the work has not progressed as quickly as we had hoped, once completed it will be a great improvement and a worthy commemoration to those from the Parish who gave their lives in the service of their country.

Once again, the Christmas tree light switch on was well attended, with members of the community coming together to enjoy the festivities which once again were supported by local businesses in the village centre. Perfecting the sound system remains a work in progress!

I would like to thank all the residents who have attended meetings or contacted us to raise issues and concerns or provide helpful information. The engagement and feedback from residents, good or bad, is always of value and helps us to improve.

For some time now, the Parish Council has been aware of the need for a community hall. Previously we have looked into whether Butchers Stile or Laburnum Road Park would be suitable as potential sites, however we have been advised by Cheshire West and Chester Council Planning Department that neither would be suitable for developing a community hall. Whilst we do not have either the money, or a site for a community Hall, we have set up a task group which has developed a business case and met with community leaders. Further meetings are planned with the aim of identifying opportunities and potential funding to attempt to resolve this long running issue.

On behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank our Cheshire West and Chester Ward Councillors who have helped part fund projects throughout the year from their member's budgets, particularly Councillors Helen Weltman and Gaynor Sinar who have attended our meetings and supported us in our enquiries and dealings with the Local Authority.

During the year, the Parish Council has lost some great people, Councillor Arthur Wood, sadly passed away. Arthur gave over 40 years' service to this Parish Council, with a depth of knowledge, experience and commitment that will be irreplaceable. He is sadly and sorely missed by us all.

Both Councillor Keith Carter and Councillor Gareth Peel had to leave us due to other commitments, and our wonderful Clerk Vicky Stock, left us for pastures new after many years' service.

We also welcomed a new Councillor, Ian Ryder who has been leading on the community hall task group with Councillor Andrew Hudson. Our new Clerk Elaine Hamlett is quickly learning the ropes and proving to be every bit effective and hard working as her predecessor. We look forward to appointing and welcoming two new Councillors during our May meeting.

I would like thank all of the Councillors of Davenham Parish Council, who give their time and effort voluntarily, working hard throughout the year in-between family and work commitments to help make the parish the wonderful place that it is.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as Chairman of Davenham Parish Council for the year and I thank the former Chairman, Councillor Katie Mattinson, and the Vice Chairman Councillor Cath Salt for their support and guidance throughout the year.

As I come to the end of my term as Chairman, I know that the role of Chairman is going to someone more than capable of succeeding in the role and I wish Cllr Salt the best of luck for the coming year.

Councillor Elton Watson  
Chairman 2017-2018