

Tarporley Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT **2005**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Annual Report of the Tarporley Parish Council for the year April 2004 to March 2005. The report is largely based on presentations made at the Annual Parish Meeting on the 9th May 2005 that were subsequently received at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on the 9th May 2005. Following consolidation and editing this report was approved on the 13th June 2005.

2. CHAIRMANS REPORT (Presented by Councillor R Brierley).

We were all deeply saddened by the long illness and ultimate passing of our Chairman, Councillor Helen Watson. Her continued keen involvement throughout her illness has been an inspiration to us all and it is in this spirit that I give this report in her place.

Tarporley Parish Council has had a very busy and productive year. Preparations for our application for Quality status have continued, involving training and the institution of new practices and procedures. Amongst these have been the continued development of the newsletter, now in its third issue, and the website. Much of the burden in terms of training and procedures has fallen to our Clerk, John Macdonald, who has approached the task with dedication and professionalism.

Further progress has been made with affordable housing, including meetings with Vale Royal Borough Council, although a tangible result has yet to be secured. Ramifications of the problem were well illustrated during the year by the difficulties experienced by two of our retained firemen in obtaining housing locally. Progress has also been made by our Highways and Traffic Sub-Committee, who are finally being heeded by the appropriate authorities. Progress in acquiring and setting up the new burial ground has been exceedingly slow, owing to bureaucracy of the authorities, but hopefully the formalities will be concluded shortly. We are also pleased to be able to assist FLAG in providing the new play and teen areas and wish Graham Lees and his team well as they prepare to get work under way.

Following the success of the Village Design Statement, we have now received grant support for the preparation of a Parish Plan. The process was outlined at the January meeting of the Council by John Cooke of Cheshire Community Council and the sub-committee has set a provisional date for a public meeting to kick off the project.

The PCSO trial continued through the year. Some benefits were apparent, including the setting up of PUBwatch and BUSINESSwatch schemes, and the principle appears sound. However, the expected level of 'visible presence' did not materialise. Most of the problems encountered arose from mis-information provided to the Council at the outset. These could be resolved in the event of a permanent placement funded by the Council. Whilst the funding issue is relatively straightforward in urban areas, where a full time PCSO can be readily supported, the police authority do not appear to have considered how shared funding could be implemented for rural coverage. The Council therefore decided that a commitment of £22 000 per year could not be justified at present.

Several controversial planning issues have again taxed our resourcefulness and patience. Amongst these have been the Estate House, Portal Hotel and Oxheys wind

generator proposals. Continued attention has been focussed on the old garage site and we are grateful to the developers for retaining their commitment despite the apparently pointless legal wrangles. Preparation of the site is now in hand and we look forward to the new shop and filling station, which should be completed early in 2006. This will mean that Tarporley will have been without a filling station for two years. The somewhat farcical issue(s) of the future of the Brook Farm School site and the proposed move of the Primary School has dragged on through the year. It is to be hoped that a sensible resolution of both will be forthcoming soon.

Among the smaller issues tackled during the year has been the re-opening of the footpath leading from the Rising Sun car park, following an initiative by Maurice Hunt. Unfortunately, the Step into Cheshire walk, also organised by Maurice, was cancelled owing to excessive bureaucracy at county level. In December we had a second successful formal switching on of the Christmas lights and this looks set to become a permanent event.

Your chairman was well pleased by our much improved performance in the Community Pride (Best Kept Village) competition and particularly with our winning the Vibrancy award. This led to our entry into the Calor Village of the Year Competition and, although we did not win any awards, the BKV Sub-Committee and all of those involved in staging the presentation on October 21st are to be congratulated. Bolstered by our success last year, we have entered even more competitions this year.

Finally, I am sure that it would have been Helen's wish to thank everyone for their continued hard work and dedication to Tarporley.

3. VALE ROYAL BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT (By Councillor T Hill)

During the year I have represented the views of my constituents and those of the Parish Council to appropriate Council Officers and to Members at Council and the Environment Review Committee, on which I serve.

My work continues to involve numerous planning issues and some of the larger projects are detailed below.

- a. Ardene Estate House: Application withdrawn.
- b. Hotel at Portal Golf Club: Approval to be granted following detailed discussion resulting in a reduction in the scale of the development and agreement regarding traffic routing and local benefits.
- c. Flaxyards Farm: Initial application withdrawn and followed by meetings likely to lead to a resubmission.
- d. SPAR petrol station and retail development: Pressure has been maintained to ensure the petrol station and new store are opened without further delay caused by legal objections. These have now been overcome and completion is promised for February 2006.
- e. Wind-farm at Oxheys Farm, Eaton: Representation has been made on behalf of many constituents who are opposed to this proposal. A planning application has yet to be made.
- f. Brook Farm: I have contributed, on a regular basis, to the ongoing debate on the future of the Brook Farm School site and the possible relocation of the Primary School. No decision has been made to date.

A new refuse collection was introduced during the year, designed to improve the level of recycling in the Borough. After several months of problems, getting used to the new schedules and procedures, it is pleasing to note the excellent improvements in the level of recycling in the Borough and a general acceptance of the new collection procedures. This is a great credit to the people of Tarporley.

Environmental Improvements: A grant has been received towards groundworks at the Community Centre. A further application has been made to assist with numerous other projects throughout the village and a decision is awaited from the Borough on the allocation of this budget.

It is pleasing to report the outcome of the discussions concerning the lowering of Oulton Mill Pool at Little Budworth. A compromise has been reached with a nominal lowering of the water level and no deleterious effect on either the fish stock or the appearance of the lake.

A duty of the Borough Councillor is to attend the new cycle of Rural Area Meetings, to discuss a range of issues affecting rural communities. One of these meetings was held in our High School and there has been some useful dialogue with a range of service providers including Police and County Council.

4. TRAFFIC & HIGHWAYS (by Councillor C Topping)

The Traffic & Highways Working Group has had a number of meetings with officers of Cheshire County Council (CCC) and Vale Royal Borough Council throughout the year to consider the traffic and parking situation in the village. In February CCC commissioned a highway and traffic audit as the first stage of the CCC Local Transport Plan, which has budgeted c £55,000 to be spent in Tarporley in the coming financial year.

The report was published in April 2005 and the council working group are currently discussing the findings with Cheshire County Council in advance of agreeing final recommendations for the implementation of the Local Transport Plan this financial year.

5. QUALITY PARISH COUNCIL (By Councillor E Boynes)

During the year ending March 2005 there has been no formal meeting of the working group primarily as a result of the extended illness of Councillor Watson who was the driving force behind this project.

All of the criteria required to satisfy the Accrediting Panel has been met with the exception of the Clerk's qualification. His portfolio has been submitted for assessment and we are waiting to be informed that it is satisfactory.

Once we have confirmation that the Clerk has qualified we shall be able to submit the application form, prior to which a meeting of the working group will need to have been convened with the task of assembling all of the supplementary documentation required to support the application. The target date for submission of the application is May 2005.

6. PUBLICITY (By Councillor E Boynes)

In April we published the fourth copy of the Parish Council Newsletter each edition of which appears to have been well received by the residents of the Parish.

The Clerk has set up our web site that carries details of the village; agendas and minutes of Parish Council meetings, reports and the electronic version of the Parish Newsletter.

There remains the problem of distribution that is currently carried out on a door-to-door basis by Councillors. This is not a satisfactory arrangement but other methods using newspaper boys/girls, Royal Mail or as enclosures with other communications is either unreliable or too costly. The Clerk is currently in discussion with the distributors of Tarporley Talk, a new advertisement based magazine that is distributed locally, to see if they can offer us an affordable and reliable distribution service.

Communication with the residents of the Parish is very important if we are to be able to provide them with the services they require so we must continue to seek further ways of improving the situation

7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING (By Councillor J Wall)

During the year we have maintained contact with the Planning Department of Vale Royal Borough Council in our joint endeavours to identify options for the provision of Affordable Housing as identified by the Housing Needs Survey (March 2004).

There may be an opportunity for affordable housing to be developed from the possible relocation of the Primary School to the site previously occupied by the Brook Farm School. Consultants have been appointed by Cheshire County Council to consider this and we await their overdue report.

It is our intention to give priority to Affordable Housing over any other developments proposed for the village.

8. COMMUNITY SECURITY (By Councillor J Greenwood)

Community Safety Officer (CSO): The trial deployment of a CSO took place during the year and PUB Watch and BUSINESS Watch schemes introduced. Although there were benefits concern was expressed over the value of the operation and the Parish Council and adjacent parishes declined to fund the scheme. Following the very recent reorganisation within Cheshire Constabulary the details of the provision of village policing are still under development.

Crime and Disorder Audit 2004: An audit was carried out in the village involving the CSO, VRBC Safety Officers, Councillors Hill, and Greenwood and a village resident. This took place during both daytime and evening and incidents such as illegal parking, speeding, litter, graffiti were noted. Computer terminals were installed for a period in public accessible locations to collect views on security issues. The result of the audit identified concerns over parking, litter and nuisance youths. Discussion continue as to the best way to deal with the identified problems.

9. BEST KEPT VILLAGE (By Councillor J Foden)

Following our poor rating in 2003, fifth out of nine in our category, our position improved to a respectable second place in 2004, only losing out to Willaston in the Wirral. We were marked “very good” in most categories, with just one area marked down to “average”.

Last year Tarporley also competed for the Community Vibrancy Award and won our class at the first attempt. Winning the Vibrancy award qualified us to enter the Calor Village of the Year Competition.

Having been briefed in mid-September, an augmented ‘Best Kept Village’ committee had to work very hard to prepare a written submission by the end of the month, followed by a presentation. The Northern Area judges visited on October 19th. At very short notice some thirty groups produced an exhibition in the Community Centre to impress the judges. This was an excellent opportunity to illustrate the variety of activities and community projects taking place in Tarporley.

The displays had to be dismantled immediately to allow the blood transfusion service in but such was the interest created that it has been suggested that we might stage a similar event for the villagers, possibly on carnival day.

Unfortunately we did not figure in the final winners: the winner of the northern area was the small village of Shelley near Holmfirth in West Yorkshire and the overall winner was St. Neot in Cornwall.

Now we need to work together to make 2005 the year when once again we become the “Best Kept Village” and demonstrate our pride in our beautiful and vibrant Tarporley. This year we will be taking part in the Community Pride competition and also, for the first time, Community Safety and North West in Bloom. A site visit by Vale Royal Borough Council officials, who are supporting our North West in Bloom entry, has highlighted a variety of repairs and improvements, which they hope to undertake this year. These include renovation of bollards and litter bins.

10. THE CEMETERY (By Councillor J Foden)

Tarporley Parish Council are pleased to report that steady progress has been made towards the acquisition of the licence that will grant permission to establish a footpath through St. Helen’s churchyard. Once the legal aspects of the licence and conveyance have been completed work will commence to form the footpath through the churchyard and the construction of a gate to the new burial ground. In the following months the Parish Council will consider the fees, rules and regulations for burials and arrange for the new area to be fenced, cleared and laid out for future burials

11. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS & CELEBRATIONS (By Councillor T Spark)

The Christmas lights celebration in 2004 had proved very successful with the switch on by the Mayor of Vale Royal and music, carols and refreshments. For 2005 it was hoped that the same level of support would be achieved and that the organisation would be improved to deal with the increased attendance.

12. TREES AND FOOTPATHS (By Councillor H Melliush).

Most trees are in acceptable condition although some in Portal Park have lost major boughs.

The Borough Council has undertaken a heavy cut of trees and scrub in Park Road spinney but although they have been requested to remove the brash this still remains as a hazard.

Concern was expressed that the heavy cut back of a section of hedge in Moss Lane may have caused damage and the replacement of any damaged hedging was requested.

13. THE PRIMARY SCHOOL (By Councillor C Topping)

The Primary School has had a good year, with SAT results again above the Cheshire average. The introduction of 'subject weeks' has been a great success, with music, literacy and science being focused upon so far. All KS 2 pupils have had the opportunity of going on a residential visit, ranging from Burwardsley to Chester and Bangor University.

New initiatives within the school include healthier menus at lunchtime, setting up a school council for pupils and the achievement of Investors in People. School involvement with the Parish Council has continued with a presentation from Councillor Topping to Year 5 pupils on the workings of the council as part of the schools focus on Citizenship and a visit from M.P. Stephen O'Brien

14. THE HIGH SCHOOL (By Councillor E Boynes)

Facilities at the High School have seen a steady improvement during the year. The school has consolidated its maths and computing special status and has installed new facilities including a video conferencing suite that enable students to take part in a video meeting with members of the European Parliament.

Construction has started on rebuilding the sixth form centre to provide necessary improvements to support the increasing number of students now preparing for further education.

15. THE COMMUNITY CENTRE (By Councillor R Craven)

Bookings and use of the Centre remain at a good level. The unexpected expenditure of £6,000 on renewing the gas supply significantly depleted financial reserves however the Centre remains viable due the support and hard work of Mrs Lea and Mrs Martin.

16. PARISH PLAN (By Councillor E Boynes)

The Parish Council, having resolved to undertake the composition of a Parish Plan invited Mr. J. Cooke of the Cheshire Community Council to address the regular meeting of the Parish Council on 22 September 2004. He explained in some detail as to how the Parish Council should set about the project, emphasising the necessity of engaging as many members of the public as possible in the enterprise.

The Working Group held its first meeting on Tuesday 26 April when it was resolved to

- Contact the Cheshire Community Council and to request the Mr. Cooke, or some other representative attended a meeting of the Working Group to give some guidance as to the procedure.
- To contact the chairmen/Secretaries of all clubs, societies and similar organisations in the parish to invite their involvement.
- To contact all organisations using the Community Centre and the Done Room.
- To contact the business and commercial organisations associated with the Parish.
- Provide a “flyer” for distribution around the Parish
- To obtain as much publicity as possible for the project.

The Working Group is grateful to the Cheshire Community Council for their assistance in obtaining £4,500 as funding for the project.

17. PLANNING (By the Clerk)

During the year comments were made on 72 planning applications. In 95% of the cases the comments of the Parish Council were reflected in the decision or conditions applied to the planning application.

The Parish Council responded to the Cheshire County Council Structure Plan consultation and the Vale Royal Borough Council Local Plan consultation

18. THE CLERKS FINANCIAL REPORT

Comparison of income expenditure and end of year balances

Last year (1.4.03 – 31.3.04) (Note 1)

▪ Opening balance	24,773.05
▪ Income receipts	
1. Precept	30,000.00
2. Other income	<u>2,352.06</u>
	32,352.06
• Expenditure payments	21,253.33
• Closing Balance	<u>35,871.78</u>

This year (1.4.04 – 31.3.05)

▪ Opening balance	35,871.78
▪ Income receipts	
1. Precept	30,000.00
2. Other income	<u>2,874.17</u>
	32,874.17
• Expenditure payments	22,736.14

Closing Balance 46,009.81

Income

Income was as planned although a reduced level of grants was compensated for by higher bank interest and VAT repayments.

Expenditure

Overall expenditure was considerably below expectation due to delays in the following projects or allocations: slow progress with the acquisition of the proposed Glebe Land cemetery (£15,000); delay in payments related to the Community Centre (£3,000); slow progress with payment towards the FLAG playground (£2,500) due to the time taken to obtain grants.

- **Administration.** Budget £8,450, actual £8,618.
- **Community Bus.** Budget £1,530 actual £1,532.
- **Community Centre.** Budget £1,000 plus £2,000 for one off on landscaping actual £0. The payment of the annual grant and landscaping spend was delayed due to ongoing discussion with VRBC over the cost of the landscaping work.
- **Christmas Lights.** Budget £3,400 actual £1,556. Payment for some costs associated with Christmas lights falls at financial year-end and can result in significant variations of spend to budget year by year. The charge for installation by VRBC was not received during the period and electricity costs for the current and previous year both fell in this period.
- **Footpaths.** Budget £1,800 actual £2,142. Extra work on footpaths (clearing hedges etc) was approved during the year.
- **Handyman.** Budget £2,500 actual £2,146. Changed emphasis of duties to reduce the amount of litter picking and increase asset maintenance still in the process of implementation.
- **Maintenance material** Budget £500 actual £64. Costs of footpath materials less than estimated.
- **S137 (The Free Resource).** Budget £3000 actual £3217. The main item was street cleaning at £2,910 compared to budget £3,000. The £307 of unbudgeted items relate to approved BKV and poppy wreath expenditure.
- **Community Security.** No budget was set for this new activity however £263 of approved expenditure was incurred on room hire and a mobile phone.
- **Village Initiatives.** Budget £2,500 actual £254. Notice boards repainted but following the repainting of the milestone by the shop owner and the generous offer from VRBC to maintain a number of benches, litter bins and bollards no significant expenditure was incurred
- **Capital Purchase Glebe Land (proposed cemetery).** Budget £15,000 actual £984. This project proceeds slowly due to the involved legal procedures of the Chester Diocese. Expenditure to date covers planning related site investigations, the purchase price of £7,500 and accrued legal costs of £1,750 are expected to fall in 2005~06 to be followed by site works, set up and ongoing maintenance costs.
- **Reserves** At year-end the asset replacement reserve stood at £6,000, the Parish Plan Reserve £1,500 and the Quality Reserve at £8,500. An overall increase of £2,000 due to the approved annual transfer to the asset replacement reserve.
- **Contingency.** Allocation £5,000, no call made on contingency.

▪ **Grants.**

<u>Recipient</u>	<u>2002/03</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>
Community Centre	1050.00	0	0.00
St Helen's Church (maintenance)	550.00	650.00	700.00
Methodist Church (lights storage)	160.00	175.00	185.00
Methodist Church (maintenance)	300.00	350.00	430.00
Methodist Church (summer club)	0.00	0.00	100.00
St Thomas Becket	0.00	300.00	0.00
Poppy appeal	25.00	<u>50.00</u>	<u>50.00</u>
Totals		1525.00	1465.00

Bank Balance

The closing balance for 31 March 2005 of £46,009.81 is as shown on the bank statement and books there being no unprocessed payments or receipts.

The opening balance on the 1 April 2004 as shown in the books was £35,871.78. Reconciliation against the bank statement shows a discrepancy of £131.12 due to cheque number 001814 dated the 8/3/04 being cashed following the closing of the books for 2003/4 giving a bank balance of £36,002.90.

The substantial balance carried forward to 2005/6 includes for the carried forward provision for expenditure on the Glebe Land, Community Centre and FLAG playground; along with approved reserves of £16,000 and contingency provision of £5,000. Detail is proved in the notes to the annual audit return.

Note 1

The Parish Council accounts are run on a receipt and payment cashbook basis.

Parish Councillor contact details

<u>PARISH COUNCILLORS</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TEL. NO.</u>
Mr E Boynes (Chairman)	5 Pearwood Close	733127
Dr R Brierley	14 Walkers Lane	732539
Mr R Craven	36 Oathills Drive	732869
Mrs J Foden	77 Oathills Drive	732681
Mrs J Greenwood	Garden House, Arderne Park	730032
Mr T Hill (VRBC)	Salterswell House	732804
Mr G Lees	3 Birch Heath Bank	733832
Mr H Melliush	2 Ash Close	732252
Mr K Parker	Hunters Close, Sapling Lane	732188
Mr T Spark (Vice-Chair)	75 Oathills Drive	732763
Mrs C Topping	23 Forest Road	732960
Mrs J Wall	1 Heath Way	733155