



Tarporley Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2007 ~ 2008

Published June 2008

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Annual Report: Tarporley Parish Council 2007/2008

This is the Annual Report of the Tarporley Parish Council for the year April 2007 to March 2008. The report is based on presentations made at the Annual Parish Meeting on the 12th May 2008 that were subsequently received along with working group papers at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on the 12th May 2008

Chairman's Report to Tarporley Parish Council.

In the past twenty-five years Tarporley has seen a huge increase in housing as developers, having identified the village as a desirable place to live, moved in with great enthusiasm to redevelop industrial, commercial and some retail premises. In addition the modest amount of land set aside for development in successive local plans has also been developed for high value housing, together with some land owned by the LEA.

We thus have a very different community living in the village with a large number of new residents using it purely as a dormitory. Good schools, shops, pubs, restaurants and a comprehensive range of excellent services, have helped to make this new community an agreeable place to live in and it remains an attractive village to visit. Tarporley has certainly changed, almost beyond recognition, for the older generation, who will remember it with affection, as a modest settlement, largely deriving its wealth from agriculture.

The past year has seen a determined and ultimately successful effort by Central Government to break up Cheshire and its two tier local government structure. A decision has now been made, without reference to the electorate and against the wishes of this Council to impose two Unitary Authorities on Cheshire.

This decision will have far reaching consequences for all Parish Councils in Cheshire.

Our responsibilities, as the first level of democratic government, have as yet to be defined but it is suggested we will have some enhanced powers. Democracy has not been best served by the halving of the number of Councillors who will now represent a very large demographic area and the present comfort of having a two member ward, serving Tarporley and Oulton at Borough Council level, will be lost. We will be losing two talented and knowledgeable Councillors in Dawn Joyce and Gill Fairhurst on 1st May 2009.

Development.

The Council devotes a considerable amount of time considering and commenting on planning applications, as they are received. As the guardian of the Village Design Statement and a formal consultee in the planning process, we believe that we can be an influence for good and have managed to achieve a number of amendments to proposals that can have a most damaging impact on neighbours and the community at large.

It is pleasing to record that thanks to the efforts of the council, no construction traffic was permitted to enter the village, during the building of the Macdonald Portal Hotel Golf and Spa Complex. In addition the swimming pool has been made available for use by the Primary School Pupils and membership concessions granted to residents wishing to join the Health Club. It is disappointing to record that despite the enthusiasm of the management to secure the approval of the Council to this major

development, during the planning stage, no invitation has been received to inspect the completed project.

Tarporley, as has been said in the preamble, remains under unremitting pressure from a variety of developers and the Council has contributed to a number of discussions during the year.

The Council is aware of the wish of the Primary School to relocate to a site adjacent to the High School but recognises that the whole project, which is likely to include the future of the Brook Farm site is likely to now go into abeyance, until the new Unitary Authority is in place. It is highly likely that the new authority will wish to reprioritise many embryo projects and this may well be one.

The Council received a presentation, by a developer, wishing to build a care home complex and a limited number of affordable houses on the land known as the daffodil field but the Planning Authority has still not received any plans. It would therefore be premature to even speculate on this proposal.

Vale Royal has now received the application to construct a care home complex on the land at the back of the Blythings and this proposal is now in the process of validation. The public have already seen the plans for this proposal, with presentations being made in the village. The Council will prepare its comments once it is in receipt of the application.

It is pleasing to report the progress that has been made to re-establish Tarporley as pre-eminent in the county, in terms of its attractiveness. Hanging baskets have been re-established and much hard work has gone into the watering and maintenance of these new holders that are considered safe and now longer a threat to the safety of the general public. Tarporley was duly awarded the runners-up prize in the Community Pride Awards for 2007.

The work of the Council continues to grow and a decision was made to attempt to give greater focus to two key areas. Accordingly two working groups have been set up to cover Village Infrastructure and Street Scene. Separate reports will be presented on the diverse activities of these and the other Council Committees. They do however give some insight into the work of the Council, of which the general public often appear unaware. It remains a matter of regret that residents appear to expect their village to be well cared for, clean, tidy and safe but rarely consider who is doing the work.

The fact is that much of it is by unpaid but dutiful and community minded citizens, who love their village and give their time willingly, for the benefit of the greater community. It is hoped that all residents will demonstrate some interest in the work of the Parish Council by visiting our tent at this year's Carnival and from time to time attending Parish Council meetings.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Councillors for their dedicated work, during the past year but my thanks in particular must go to our Clerk, John Macdonald. John is a dedicated professional, without whose qualifications we would not have become one of the first Quality Parish Councils in Cheshire. The work he puts in, on behalf of the community, far exceeds any modest remuneration he may receive and his recreational duties, with his beloved dog is an additional bonus, as he walks every inch of the village, noting problems for early resolution, on a daily basis. The whole community owes him a very great debt of gratitude.

Infrastructure Working Group

The IWG was formed in January 2008, and was an amalgamation of the following previous working groups:- Transport & Highways, Security, Community Bus & Christmas Lights. The working group has six members – Heidi Nickson (spokesperson), Ernest Boynes, Gill Clough, James Blackford, Tom Spark & Ken Parker.

Previous to the new group's formation, a few initiatives had been carried out in Transport and Highways, which included looking at the speeding problems on the high street. There is still the possibility of getting a SID campaign in place, although the contact at CCC is not particularly forthcoming with carrying this project forward. Also work was carried out to get some new road signs and to help the flow of traffic away from the new Portal Hotel development.

The newly invigorated IWG has now had three meetings (February, March & April) and can report the following developments:

- 1) Community bus – the service funded largely by the Parish precept is being actively promoted, and this is a marvellous service to the elderly and infirm of our village that is currently under utilised. Tom Spark has travelled on the service, and reported that it is very much appreciated by the current passengers. We are currently in the middle of researching the other bus services available to residents.
- 2) The PCSO – we are now working more closely with Emily Benson, to more accurately demonstrate the benefits felt by residents of having a PCSO. Whilst there is much general goodwill towards her, we believe this needs to be more tangible, and a CAM meeting has been set up for 23/06/08. We will also seek to resurrect a village wide homewatch scheme.
- 3) Transport & Highways – a meeting was held with Ian Woodward of CCC in March 2008. A number of issues with our pavements and road surfaces were discussed, and he has verbally given agreement to getting a number of these rectified over the coming months. The IWG will also be endeavouring to put pressure on the new Unitary authority to get some level of restricted parking on the High Street within the next 18 to 24 months.
- 4) Christmas Light Festival – the IWG feels that this has been a missed opportunity in the past for our village to really do something on a community basis to celebrate Christmas. Much thought is being given to the Festival that will be held on the 5th December 2008, to which everyone will be welcome.
- 5) Village Commerce – the IWG is endeavouring to reinvigorate a business association to promote trade into the village. We are seeking to enlist the help of an independent chairperson to spearhead this.
- 6) A Farmers Market – much thought is being given to the possibility of holding a Farmers Market at regular intervals in Tarporley. Consideration is being given to a possible location, and how best this could be run.

Street Scene Working Group

Members of the Working Group: Cllr Dawn Joyce (Spokesperson), Cllr Richard Brierley (Deputy), Cllr Tim Hill, Cllr Linda Burrows, Cllr Graham Lees, Cllr Roy Craven.

- Tarporley came Runner-Up out of 10 in the Best Kept Village competition in 2007. This was an excellent result after the previous year's 6th placing. Thanks are due to all those village-wide who contributed to this result. The feedback provided by the judges has been taken on board and we are hoping for at least this placing again this year, but obviously would like to win back the coveted trophy.
- Tarporley won the Cheshire 2007 Countryside Environment and Wildlife Trust Award comprising a wooden plaque, certificate and £250. This award was due to the hard work and commitment expended by certain members of the Parish Council and the community in transforming and replacing the children's playground, together with the extensive replanting of trees and shrubs.
- Thanks to lots of hard work by the Parish Clerk, a petition led by Hannah Gregory and much vocal and written support by the Parish Council and village at large, the hanging baskets were back in all their glory in 2007. The new flower baskets seem to have proven a success and we are looking forward to an even greater display in 2008 thanks to an increase in the provision of the planters by VRBC. From April 2008 the responsibility for financing the watering of these lovely baskets rests with the Parish Council.
- A Best Kept Garden Competition and Best Kept Hanging Basket Competition was held during the summer of 2007 with Hollies Farm Shop kindly performing the role of judge and supplying the generous prizes. There were 6 residential entries and 4 shop/commercial entries. The residential winner was Mr John Wilson, 29 Birch Heath Road, and the commercial winner was Follies, Park Road.
- The Street Scene Working Group has applied for a grant of £600 to improve the planted area outside and around the Community Centre. The grant has to be 'match-funded' and Cllrs Lees and Burrows, plus partners and David Martin, have offered to give 64 man-hours of voluntary labour, which is very generous and for which we are very grateful.
- The SSWG is entering a local garden in Tarporley for the 2008 Cheshire Community Garden Competition. Entries have been sought from the public and a decision will be made in time for the closing date.
- The SSWG has had two meetings so far in 2008 and a number of initiatives are on going. Cllrs Joyce and Brierley have walked all of the unmade footpaths in the village to ascertain their condition and whether sufficient maintenance is being undertaken. Cllrs Lees and Burrows have reviewed all of the entrances to the village and the outcomes of both surveys are in the process of being discussed. It is apparent that the Parish Council carries out work outside the scope of its legal responsibility in relation to the footpaths.
- On behalf of the SSWG the Parish Clerk has written to BT complaining about the poor state of the telephone exchange and requesting that they take action to re-furbish it.
- Cllr Hill has been reviewing the trees in the village and is making on-going observations and suggestions.

- Dog fouling continues to be a growing problem in the village. The Parish Clerk has arranged to get a large box of dog waste bags from VRBC for free distribution in the village. The Parish Council employs a dog warden and the public is requested to be vigilant and to report an owner who is allowing his/her dog to foul public areas and not clean up after them.
- Litter is another problem facing the SSWG is keen to address and the PCSO is now able to issue fixed penalty notices for anyone caught dropping litter. There are plenty of litterbins throughout the village, although the SSWG has a list of additional ones it would like to see installed.
- The SSWG has reviewed the contracts of the PC employees and has made various comments to the Clerk.

Communications

Parish Newsletter

The first issue of the Newsletter was in March 2004 since when it has been published at approximate quarterly intervals, the last and final issue being March 2008.

The Newsletter was generally well received but the Parish Council is of the opinion that there should be a more frequent publication of news and comment concerning the parish. It has been decided that future editions of the Newsletter will be included every two months in Tarporley Talk with a single page every other month.

By this means it is hoped that the residents can be better and more frequently informed of parish matters.

Readers of the Chester Chronicle might have observed that news of parish event, including sports reports now feature regularly in the Community Section of the Country issue of that newspaper. It is hoped over time to expand the content but the amount published is sometimes restricted for editorial reasons.

A representative of any club, team or social organisation who would like information or news of their organisation to be published should contact Councillor Ernest Boynes, ideally by email, to ernest@boynes.com by the Sunday prior to publication.

Cemetery

During the year the final preparations and documentation for the administration of the new Civil Cemetery were completed and in December the area for those wishing a Church of England burial was consecrated by the Bishop of Birkenhead. Rules were also decided as to who would have a right of burial in the cemetery, the reservation of plots and the charges.

It had been anticipated that the cemetery would first be put into used sometime after April 2008. Unfortunately, in January, it was found that the St. Helen's Churchyard could accommodate no more burials so the Civil Cemetery was put into use earlier than expected.

Tarporley Parish Council ~ Clerk's Financial Report 2007~08

The Clerk's report is produced to meet the requirements of the external auditor who requires an explanation of the variances from last year's expenditure profile. The line numbers refer to the Section 1 Statement of Accounts of the Annual (Audit) Return, a copy of this as well as the detailed variance analysis and the asset summary can be provided by the Clerk.

Income (Line 2 & Line 3, see detail sheet)

Total income in 07-08 increased by £4,928 to £55842. This may seem relatively modest but a breakdown shows that the annual precept was increased by the Parish Council by £11,500 largely to cover the cost of a Police Community Support Officer and that this was partly countered by a reduction in the VAT reclaim for VAT paid (these levels being both variable and much higher than in the past due to one off transactions relating to the play area and cemetery). The level of one off grants shows some year-by-year variation and an income stream from the new cemetery appears for the first time in the annual accounts.

Expenditure (Line 4 & Line 6, see detail sheet)

Staff costs in 07-08 increased by £644 to £9,739 reflecting the nationally agreed annual wage increase and increased hours related to the new cemetery.

Other payments in 07-08 increased by £141 to £50,127, as with income this may seem a modest increase but it does not reflect substantial changes in the underlying cost profile. The detail is in the detailed variance analysis but the more significant issues are commented on here.

Increases in cost were seen in a number of activities. Grant payments in 07-08 increased by £624 to £2,858 primarily due to an increased grant to the Community Centre reflecting meeting identified needs and a grant towards the redecoration of the Done Room.

A cost increase of £2,070 has been incurred in relation to maintaining the village appearance via the Handyman and Footpath contracts, this increase relates to removing fly tipping, graffiti removal, flagpole repairs, taking over hanging basket watering and work towards the Best Kept Village Competition. The Parish Council is working with the Footpath contractor to contain an underlying upward trend in footpath costs.

A cost increase of £6,388 relating to the Christmas Lights in part reflects the variability of the level and timing of charges from the Principal Authority (£5,290 in 07/08) but also includes for necessary repairs and for the replacement of the light strings in the Chestnut Tree amounting to £965 in 06/07 and £2,600 in 07/08.

Community security costs increased substantially to cover the £11,000 annual charge for the Police Community Support Officer.

Progress towards preparing the new cemetery for opening resulted in an increase of £1,531 to £2,549 however £789 of this is a one off cost.

Reductions in cost were seen in a number of activities. The Parish Plan payments in 07-08 reduced by £1,494 to £301 but further increased expenditure on printing is expected on this grant funded one off activity. Village initiatives payments in 07-08 reduced by £679 to £20 due to the delay in installing the proposed Helen Watson memorial planter. Capital purchases payments reduced substantially by £7,201 to

£2,746 in 07-08 reflecting one off cemetery, CCTV and play area costs. The annual cost of Christmas Lights electricity reduced from £520 to £188 in 07/08 following changes to the light displays and a review of the units used, a repayment for excess charges in earlier years is being pursued. VAT payments in 07-08 reduced by £11,472 to £2,746 all VAT is reclaimed and these levels are both variable and much higher than in the past due to one off transactions relating to the play area and cemetery.

Year End Balances (Line 1, Line 8)

The Council maintains year-end balances that consist of cash in hand to meet planned expenditure needs and reserves relating to specific grants or for particular projects or contingencies as detailed below.

The progressive reduction in year-end balances reflects the deliberate decisions of the council to fund an increased mix of regular expenditure and the programme of one of expenditures from reserves rather than responding to the inflationary pressure to increase the precept. The only recent exception is the increase to fund the Police Community Support Officer. It is likely that this drawing on reserves will be reviewed in future years.

Balances carried forward	Year ending £	
Description	31-Mar-07	31-Mar-08
Cash in hand & Contingency	920.13	3,377.38
Quality Reserve	6,000.00	0.00
Asset Reserve	8,000.00	8,000.00
Parish Plan Reserve	4,053.08	3,746.00
Employee Gratuity Reserve	895.54	1,246.51
Youth Reserve	1,912.88	1,912.88
Play Area Reserve	2,950.09	736.24
Cemetery Reserve	0.00	1,700
Total	24,731.72	20,758.01

- **Cash in hand & Contingency** The Council has in recent years endeavoured to maintain year-end contingency of £5,000.
- **Quality Reserve.** When the Council achieved quality status an element of reserve was designated for initiatives related to this new status. During the year 07/08 it was decided to release funds from this reserve to cover expenditure in 06/07 on the cemetery and CCTV and in 07/08 on the cemetery, Christmas Lights and village appearance.
- **Asset Reserve.** The Council established an assets replacement reserve in 2004 to cover the eventual replacement of fixed assets. Funds are transferred to the reserve when available and it will be drawn on to replace deteriorated elements of the £84,747 asset base when required.
- **Parish Plan Reserve.** This represents government funding of £4,500 plus a Parish Council match funding of £1,500. Work was largely completed by March 2008 however substantial printing costs will fall in to 2008/09.
- **Employee Gratuity Reserve.** This represents a sum accumulated in lieu of pension payments to the clerk to be paid in accordance with his terms and conditions

- **Youth Reserve.** This is a sum granted from the Tarporley Youth Club following its cessation and designated to be spent on the development of facilities for the youth of the village.
- **Play Area Reserve.** This is the residual fund from the FLAG play area initiative that resulted in the Council acquiring a play facility adjacent to the Community Centre and is designated to be spent on the play area. Play area equipment was bought in 07/08.
- **Cemetery Reserve.** This is the income from the newly established cemetery; it will be netted against costs on an annual basis in future years. Surplus of income over cost will be fed back to the general account to the amount of the set up cost of the cemetery and then further surpluses will be accumulated here for cemetery improvements and to form a fund for maintenance of the cemetery in perpetuity. The cemetery is run on a cost neutral non profit basis

Total Cash and Short Term Investments (Line 8)

Total cash and investments is the same as the year-end balance and is represented by cash held as £100 in a current account and the rest in an interest earning reserve account. The values of these reserve balances are visible to the Council on its current monthly financial reports. All balances are cleared daily in the interest earning reserve account. Once a stable funding situation is reached the Council will review its strategy on reserve fund management and transfer any substantial long-term reserves to ensure the level of return is acceptable in accordance with the LGA 1972, Trustee Act 2000.

Total fixed assets and long-term assets (Line 9)

The council's fixed assets consist of equipment, street furniture and buildings, land, playground equipment, CCTV and office equipment. The increase of £1,479 is the net of a reduction of £405 due to scrapping of plastic litterbins replaced by the principal authority with new cast heritage units and an additional £1,884 of play area equipment.

Borrowings (Line 5 & Line 10)

The council has no borrowings or related repayments.

Parish Councillor contact details

<u>PARISH COUNCILLORS</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TEL. NO.</u>
Mr J Blackford	71 Eaton Rd	732585
Mr E Boynes	5 Pearwood Close	733127
Dr R Brierley	14 Walkers Lane	732539
Mrs L Burrows	23 Churchill Drive	733228
Mrs G Clough	18 Utkinton Rd	733545
Mr R Craven	36 Oathills Drive	732869
Mr T Hill (Chairman)	Salterswell House	732804
Mrs D Joyce (VRBC)	36 Torr Rise	730824
Mr G Lees	3 Birch Heath Bank	733832
Mrs H Nickson	47 The High Street	730601
Mr K Parker	Hunters Close, Sapling Lane	732188
Mr T Spark (Vice-Chair)	75 Oathills Drive	732763