



# *Tarporley Parish Council*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2009~2010

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## **Annual Report: Tarporley Parish Council 2009/2010**

This is the Annual Report of the Tarporley Parish Council for the year April 2009 to March 2010. The report is based on presentations made at the Annual Parish Meeting on the 10th May 2010 that were subsequently received along with working group papers at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on the 10th May 2010

### **Chairman's Report – Dr Richard Brierley**

The past year might appear to be a period of relative inactivity. It has, however, been a time dominated by uncertainty and adjustment to the new regime of local government in Cheshire.

The parish council had over many years established a reasonably satisfactory working relationship with the old borough and county councils. The emergent Cheshire West and Chester Council has adopted totally different principles for communication with parish councils. The heavy reliance on the Internet and the central clearing or referral of enquiries, both proving less than reliable, coupled with changes of personnel and responsibilities, has resulted in wasted time and long delays in responding to our requests. In late February, five long standing requests were posted for discussion at a local area forum; three being partially answered at the meeting and a fourth subsequently but via a totally different route. We still await any response on the other four.

Formulation of new policies to replace those of the former councils has resulted in an avalanche of draft documents to be read and commented on. For instance, over the Christmas and New Year period, several councillors were occupied in forming our response to the draft Local Development Framework, which will in our case replace the Vale Royal Local Plan and is therefore a document with potentially great impact on Tarporley. To get it wrong would have far-reaching consequences and the village as we know it could disappear in a commuter sprawl.

The severe winter weather again caused problems with gritting and an initiative is in hand to hopefully provide improved local cover for hazardous areas off the CWaC gritting routes. The prolonged frosts also caused damage to the infrastructure, mainly roads and footways. The damaging potential of frost is clearly illustrated by the near destruction of the lower part of the concrete steps by the playground.

On a positive note, the Parish Plan objectives continue to develop. The market is now well established and has become an independent venture. After the false start, caused by the closure of The Crown, the new youth club is now establishing itself at the Community Centre. Thanks are due for the hard work of the volunteers in achieving this reincarnation. A further part of the Parish Plan Implementation Grant has enabled the Community Centre to purchase new tables and storage trolleys. Finally, the cemetery is now fully functional for burials and has perhaps seen more use than we would like. In the near future we hope to landscape the north east corner of the cemetery to provide a feature area and provision for burial of ashes.

Finally I wish to express my gratitude to all those serving on Tarporley Parish Council for their hard work and forbearance during the last year. In particular I would like to thank Cllr. Clough, who took on the lion's share of the clerk's duties during his enforced absence.

## **Infrastructure Working Group Spokespersons Report - Gill Clough**

The Infrastructure Working Group has looked at and discussed a variety of issues of concern to the residents of Tarporley, such as parking, speeding, gritting of the local roads, the lack of local sports facilities, and the bus services. As part of the Parish Council's role as an initiator; a possible source of start-up funds; and supporter of projects, individual Councillors have worked on a number of projects during the year, and have successfully found volunteers to take on the ownership and running of them in the longer term.

One such project was the Country Market, which started in January 2009 and is held on the first Saturday of the month. It has now become established, and in October it changed from being run by a committee of local residents, to being run by a private company. In its 9 month's as a community venture, it raised almost £1,500 which was distributed amongst 10 local charities in January 2010.

Another project, a youth group in the Crown Hotel, started well in July, but had to close down when the Hotel was put up for sale. However it has now re-opened at the Community Centre on Monday evenings.

In April 2009, we entered Tarporley for the Cheshire Community Spirit Award, and held a "Meet the Judges" event with local groups in August. We were most pleased to be nominated as the runners up in our first attempt at this award. In high hopes, the entry form for 2010 has been sent in.

The now annual Christmas Lights event was held on the first Friday in December and it was well supported by local people. It gave 5 local charities an opportunity to raise funds, as well as the children a chance to meet Father Christmas.

The 3 year contract for the Police Community Service Officer (PCSO), a post part-funded by the Parish Council, was due to end in March 2010. So in order to decide whether the post should be refunded and what roles the community want the PCSO to undertake, residents' views were sought via Tarporley Talk and subsequently a public meeting was held. It has been agreed to continue part funding the post; the contract has been reviewed; and new communication methods established, including a monthly PCSO article in Tarporley Talk.

In order to start to tackle the problem of speeding, a Speed Indicator Device (SID) was placed at various sites on the roads in the village during 10 days in April 2010. We are awaiting the results before we take further steps to address this problem.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank everyone in the village for their time and contribution towards what has been achieved this year. It has been another busy year, which saw the completion of some projects; the start of others; and some waiting on the drawing board for next year.

## **Street Scene Working Group Spokespersons Report – Dr. Richard Brierley**

Despite the group being under-strength for the first part of the year and there being fewer formal meetings than normal, progress has been maintained.

Our poor performance in the Best Kept Village competition last year was a disappointment. This was in part caused by the downgrading of local council services following the demise of VRBC resulting, for example, in unsatisfactory street cleaning and weed treatment. Added to this was some deterioration in the appearance of certain areas of the village and a degree of variability in judging. This year we intend to do better.

Following our usual winter surveys of footpaths and street furniture, we have compiled a programme of rectification and improvement. Many items require action by CWaC and past experience indicates that persistence will be required in order to secure this. A few are dependent on the co-operation of residents or businesses, which we are sure that we can count on. Other items are within direct control of the parish council and are being expedited despite delays occasioned by the long and severe winter.

Bins, bollards and benches are in need of a repaint and in some cases repair. The village and parish council noticeboards both require attention and it is hoped that the former can be enlarged and made a little more user-friendly. We also understand that, time permitting, Peter Willis will shortly be repainting the village sign.

This year we hope to have the 'hanging' baskets filled earlier than in the last two years to brighten the High Street before mid summer. Hopefully, there will also be improvements to signage and more planters installed during this year: we only await permission for siting from CWaC. The group is also giving thought to suitable, sympathetic, improvement of the main village approaches.

There are more difficult issues, such as dog-fouling, chewing gum deposits and graffiti: also a number of untidy properties in the village. Among the latter are the telephone exchange, the old post office and the adjacent telephone kiosk, all of which would in days past have been well maintained by the GPO. Now we have to cajole the various current owners to make them even vaguely presentable.

Dog fouling has been a perennial issue for many years, the absence of any effective support from VRBC and now CWaC being a source of continued frustration to the group and indeed the council as a whole. Progress seemed to be made immediately following the e-coli scare but this proved to be unrelated and the response declined accordingly. We will, however, persevere.

A further concern is the steady loss of mature trees in the village. Trees are felled for various reasons but are rarely being replaced, particularly with appropriate native species. To this end several groups have this year been encouraged to take advantage of the availability of free native trees and shrubs from the Cheshire Landscape Trust.

Once again I must thank members of the group and caring residents and businesses for their contributions to making Tarporley a pleasant place to be.

## **Cemetery Committee Report for the year – The Clerk**

The Tarporley Parish Council Cemetery is now in its second full year of operation and has become a necessary and welcome service provided to the village. During the year the fallen tree at the west end was largely removed by volunteer help. An order has been placed for the installation of a water tap by the gates for use by both cemetery and churchyard visitors for water for flowers.

During the year 6 burials took place, Income from cemetery charges of £3,670 was received and expenditure of £1,722 in maintenance charges incurred. The surplus of income over expenditure will be used to improve the cemetery, repay the initial establishment costs and accrued for the long-term maintenance of the cemetery.

A grant of £1,000 was received from the Winifred Trust towards the small garden area and seating to be constructed in the northeast corner.

## **Clerk's report on finances for the year - John Macdonald**

The year opened with a bank balance of £36,635, an anticipated income of £54,000 from the precept and modest other income expected from cemetery charges, grants and bank interest to fund a budget of £53,272. In practice additional income was accrued due to the receipt of Parish Plan implementation grants, the community bus grant and the growing income stream from the new cemetery resulting in a total other income of £10,197. Expenditure during the year amounted to £53,268 and with the increased income this resulted in a year-end balance of £47,564, the balance being carried forward includes provision for asset replacement and significant sums for agreed projects such as a grant towards the Community Centre heating system and grant funded Parish Plan implementation expenditure. The declared total value of fixed assets increased from £86,127 to £145,674 due to a combination of index linking and the inclusion of insured assets not previously recorded on the asset register.

## **Parish Councillor contact details**

STD code for phone numbers 01829

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| Mr R Craven                      | 36 Oathills Drive           | 732869                 |
| Mr T Hill                        | Salterswell House           | 732804                 |
| Mrs D Joyce (Vice-Chairman) *    | 36 Torr Rise,               | 730824                 |
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\* As of May 2010