

Barlaston Parish Council

Chairman's Annual Report 2011/2012

The Parish Council continued to meet monthly through 2011/12 in the Ruth Dickson Room of the Village Hall. It was pleasing to note that the Open Forums held before the formal meeting were well supported through the year with Villagers taking advantage of the opportunity of raising matters of concern with the Parish Council. This is an important way for villagers to keep in touch with the full Council.

Councillor Louise Stone resigned due to pressure of work in October and her place as one of the ward councillors for Barlaston East has been taken by Patrick Linehan of Longton Road.

The Parish Council Planning Committee considered over 30 applications during the year and where appropriate made comments to the Planning Department of Stafford Borough Council. The Council has held meetings with Stafford and Rural Homes and the Community Police on Barlaston Park and has also had two meetings with the Cricket Club to inspect the management of the Council owned ground.

A significant factor during the year following an improved working relationship with the Parochial Church Council has been the improvement in the management of the Churchyard Extension on Station Road. A great deal of attention has been paid to improving the hedges, the pathways and the surrounds and the general layout. It is felt that the area is once again appropriate for quiet reflection. The Council is grateful for the financial support of Waterford Wedgwood Royal Doulton in undertaking some of this work

A major concern for the Council has been the decision of Stoke on Trent City Council to close Wedgwood Memorial College as an Adult Education facility with effect from the end of March 2012. The Council soon after the announcement of the 'closure' intention resolved to support the 'Save the Wedgwood College' organisation in its plans to secure a Capital Asset Transfer but unfortunately this approach to the City Council was unsuccessful. The Parish Council will remain concerned that the future of such a large area of prime land in the centre of the village is in doubt and is seeking to work with Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council to produce a 'Planning and Design' statement that can assist future considerations as to the land use. The Council feels strongly that there should be local input on the future development of the land.

During the year villagers were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to examine areas of villager concern. The responses have been analysed and an 'action plan' is being formulated to seek to address the main areas of concern. It was evident from the responses received that the majority of villagers found Barlaston a very pleasant place

to live. It was also gratifying to note the large number of people who volunteered their services to become involved activities such as the First Responders, Voluntary Transport, Neighbourhood Watch and Speed Watch. The questionnaire rightly highlighted concerns about traffic speed on the main roads in and out of the village, on-road parking and litter/anti social behaviour. The Council intends to continue working with villagers and the appropriate agencies to reduce the causes for these concerns.

The Golden Jubilee Award for 2011 was presented to Tony Dodd in recognition of his work with the Voluntary Transport Scheme (with his wife Gill), his support for the community in Barlaston Park and for his work whilst a member of the Village Hall Committee. It was appropriate that the presentation was made at the Village Hall on the evening following the successful Village Show.

The Management Committee of the Village Hall has had another very successful year. It is pleasing to note how well the Hall is now used with a varied weekly programme available. It would seem that hardly a week goes by without some local family using the Hall for a children's party. Also some of the social events held in the Hall have been very well received and have greatly helped in fostering an improved community spirit. The Council was pleased to provide the finance to replace the 'package' boiler in the Hall at a cost of £3.5k and it is gratifying to note the reduction in utility costs (one of the major costs of running the Hall), that are resulting from the boiler upgrade and the other work undertaken to improve insulation .

Plans still exist to improve the Canal towpath from Meaford to the Plume of Feathers. Implementation has been delayed as a result of the Public Funding constraints but there can be some optimism that the work will start in 2012.13.

Work is in hand locally preparing for the Diamond Jubilee in June. A team of enthusiastic volunteers is working under the direction of Councillor Elly Philpott to put together an exciting programme which will involve the whole village. There is confidence that the events scheduled will be well supported.

The Village Website received a makeover during 2011 and it is now also possible to access the site on Facebook. Mrs Lynne Coates has worked hard as webmaster and it is pleasing to note that increasing use that is made of the site as a point of information dissemination and communication.

Grants have been awarded under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as follows:

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal	£250
Barlaston Cricket Club (firework display)	£100
St John's PCC (Church Magazine)	£250

Barlaston Boys Brigade (football strip)	£350
Barlaston Youth Association	£58
Total	£1008

In conclusion I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk, Neil Hemmings, for their support and input over the past year. I would also like to acknowledge the support of County Councillor Ian Parry and my fellow Borough Councillor Lynne Bakker Collier.

Gareth Jones

April 2012